Fat is one of three macronutrients in food that provide calories, or “energy,” for the body. Each gram of fat provides 9 calories.
Health Facts

- Dietary fat has more than **twice the calories** per gram as either carbohydrate or protein, so calories from fat can add up quickly.
- **Saturated and trans fats** can raise the levels of total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein (LDL or “bad”) cholesterol in the blood – which, in turn, can **increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease**. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in both men and women in the U.S.
- The **Dietary Guidelines for Americans** recommends consuming **less than 10% of calories per day from saturated fat** by replacing it with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. The guidelines also recommend keeping the intake of **trans fat as low as possible** by limiting foods containing partially hydrogenated oils (a source of artificial trans fat).
- To reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases, while maintaining adequate intake of important nutrients, follow these ranges for total fat intake:
  - Adults (ages 19 years and older): 20-35% of calories from fat
  - Older children and adolescents (ages 4 to 18 years): 25-35% of calories from fat
  - Young children (ages 1 to 3 years): 30-40% of calories from fat

For Monitoring Total Fat in Your Diet

Use the **Nutrition Facts Label** as your tool for monitoring consumption of total fat. The Nutrition Facts Label on packaged foods and beverages shows the amount in grams (g) and the Percent Daily Value (%DV) of total fat in one serving of the food.

The Nutrition Facts Label also lists the types of fat that make up the total fat in a product. This includes the amount in grams (g) per serving of saturated fat and trans fat and the %DV of saturated fat. Food manufacturers may also **voluntarily** list the amount in grams (g) per serving of monounsaturated fat and polyunsaturated fat.

- □ When comparing foods, look at the %DV of total fat. And remember:
  - 5% DV or less of total fat per serving is low
  - 20% DV or more of total fat per serving is high
- □ Look for sources of saturated fat and trans fat on the ingredient list on a food package. Some examples of ingredients that contain these fats are: beef fat (tallow or suet), butter, chicken fat, cream, partially hydrogenated oil, pork fat (lard), shortening, and tropical oils (such as coconut oil, palm kernel oil, and palm oil).
  - **Tip**: Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight — the closer an ingredient is to the beginning of the list, the more of that ingredient is in the food.
- □ Choose lean cuts of meats and poultry. Trim or drain fat from meats before or after cooking and remove poultry skin before cooking or eating.
- □ Try seafood and plant sources of protein (such as soy products and unsalted nuts and seeds) in place of some meats and poultry.
- □ Substitute fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) dairy products (such as cheese, milk, and yogurt) or fortified soy beverages for regular/full-fat (whole) dairy products.
- □ Cook and bake with liquid oils (such as canola and olive oil) instead of solid fats (such as butter, lard, and shortening).
- □ Try baking, broiling, grilling, and steaming. These cooking methods do not add extra fat.
- □ Limit desserts, savory snacks, and sweets (such as cakes, chips, chocolate candies, cookies, crackers, ice cream, and microwave popcorn).
- □ When eating out, ask which fats are being used to prepare your meal. You can also request to see nutrition information, which is available in many chain restaurants.