

## POSITION STATEMENT

### Fats and oils


The [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#) (the Guidelines) and the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating provide advice about the amounts and kinds of foods that we need to eat for health and wellbeing. Variety is the key to eating well and getting all the nutrients we need.

The Guidelines also state fats and oils should be used in small amounts only. Where possible choose plant based oils such as canola as this is an unsaturated fat.

Fat is essential to life and fulfills a wide range of functions in the body:

- Supplies fuel for the body's cells
- Provides a protective layer around organs such as the liver and kidneys
- Insulates our bodies against heat loss.

However, fats are not all the same; the chemical structure determines the fat's physical form, nutritional quality and effects on the body.

<b>Saturated and/or trans fat</b> Solid at room temperature, and found primarily in animal foods	<b>Unsaturated fat and Omega-3</b> Liquid at room temperature. Split into monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats and are largely from plant-based sources
<b>Sources:</b> Processed meat (e.g. sausages, salami) Pastry Fatty or fried take-away foods Packaged cakes and biscuits Butter Hard and full fat soft cheeses Full fat dairy products Cream; crème fraîche Chicken skin and visible fat on meats Coconut oil and coconut cream Palm oil	<b>Sources:</b> Olives; nuts, seeds Oils (e.g. olive oil, canola, sunflower, safflower) Oily fish; poultry; eggs Margarine spreads (mono. and polyunsaturated) 
Known to raise cholesterol and increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Dietary advice is to reduce saturated fat intake and replace with unsaturated fats.	These types of fats have been shown to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.  Omega-3 is beneficial for cardiovascular health as they are shown to reduce circulating fats and inflammation

## Coconut oil

Sometimes coconut oil is promoted as a 'superfood'. This is not the case. Coconut oil is high in saturated fat, it is not an essential or necessary part of healthy diet.



*Did you know that coconut oil...*

- is around 90% saturated fat
- contains no vitamins or minerals and offers no nutritional benefit
- when consumed in excess, could contribute to an increased risk of coronary heart disease
- can raise the less favourable LDL-cholesterol higher than other plant oils.

## Expert advice

According to the Heart Foundation, too much unhealthy saturated and trans fat increases your risk of heart disease. People are encouraged to limit saturated fat, and avoid trans-fat.

Small amounts of trans fats naturally occur in dairy and meat products. The way some fats and oils are processed during manufacturing produces artificial or 'industrially produced' trans fats. They're in foods that use partially hydrogenated vegetable fats, like deep-fried foods and some baked foods like cakes and biscuits.

## Tips for eating less saturated and trans fats:

1. Choose reduced fat milk, cheese and yoghurt
2. On packaged food, check the ingredients list for 'hydrogenated oils' or 'partially hydrogenated vegetable oils' and avoid foods that contain these
3. If you have a sweet tooth, make your own cakes, biscuits or slices and ensure the recipe contains fruit and replace butter with margarine or canola oil, and cut out the icing
4. Limit takeaway food like hamburgers, pizza and hot chips. These foods should only be eaten sometimes and in small amounts (or make you own using core foods)
5. Eat fish instead of meat 2-3 times a week, and choose legume or bean-based meals twice a week.

<b>Butter vs Margarine in school canteens</b>	
<b>Off the menu</b>	<b>Substitution</b>
School canteens should not use butter in recipes, sandwiches or other canteen items as approximately 50% of the fat content in butter is saturated fat and 4% is trans fat.	Swap butter for a margarine spread made from canola, sunflower, olive or dairy blends.  Alternatively, try using avocado, hummus, reduced fat mayonnaise or tahini as a spread.

Sources:

National Heart Foundation of Australia. (2008). Q&A Omega-3: general. Retrieved from:

<http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/Fish-QA-General.pdf>

National Heart Foundation of Australia. (2016). Replace unhealthy fats with healthy fats. Retrieved from:

<https://heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating/food-and-nutrition/fats-and-cholesterol/replaceunhealthy-fats-with-healthy-fats>

National Heart Foundation of Australia. (2016). Saturated and trans fats. Retrieved from:

<http://heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating/food-and-nutrition/fats-and-cholesterol/saturated-and-trans-fat>

Western Australian School Canteen Association Inc (2016) *Inside scoop on food*