



Get the Facts on Fats

Dietary fats play an important role in a child's growth and development. They are essential for:

- Providing fuel for energy and growth
- Building healthy cells. Fats help form cell membranes in all body cells.
- Building brain cells. Children need more fat for proper neurological development.
- Absorbing and storing fat soluble vitamins A, D, E and K
- Protecting and cushioning body organs

Contrary to popular belief that fats should be avoided, they are an essential part of a healthy diet. Although kids need fat in their diets-, the type of fat and the amount is just as important. Too much of the wrong kind of fat can result in weight gain which put kids at risk for high blood pressure, heart disease and obesity. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends different amounts of fat for different ages of development¹.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Percentage of Calories</u>
1 year *	35-40%
2-3 years	30-35%
4-18 years	25-35%

The average calorie intake for a 2-3 year old is 1200 calories

* For proper growth and development children 2 years and under should not consume fat-free or low-fat milk.²

Choosing healthy fats

Children should get most of their fats from healthy, unsaturated sources found in oils, nuts, seeds, avocados and fish. They should limit their intake of saturated fats, found in high fat cuts of meat, butter, whole milk and full-fat dairy products, to no more than 10 percent of their total calories. In addition, they should avoid trans fats, which are found in many fried foods, pastries, stick margarine, hydrogenated oils and some processed foods.

Here's how you can make healthy fats a part of your child's diet:

- After age 2 switch to 1% or fat free milk and low-fat or reduced-fat dairy products
- Opt for lean cuts of meat and remove all skin from poultry. Trim excess fat from all meats. Choose 90% or more lean ground beef, chicken and turkey.
- Switch to a light tub margarine from butter or stick margarine.
- Consume seafood 2 times a week.
- Choose light vinaigrettes for dressings instead of creamy versions.
- Cook foods in a small amount of oil instead of butter.
- Grill, roast (on a rack) or steam meats to allow fats to drip away.
- Use mustard or hummus as a sandwich spread or choose low-fat mayonnaise.
- Use fat-free Greek yogurt in place of sour cream.

1. CDC. Nutrition for Everyone. Dietary Fat. <http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/basics/fat/index.html>

2. KidsHealth.org Fats and Your Child. <http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/feeding/fat.html#>