Cut the saturated fat from your diet
Helpful hints

So you want to lose weight... for good
If you want to lose a little weight or prevent yourself gaining any more, why not write, call or e-mail us for a free copy of the British Heart Foundation's 30-page full colour booklet? It is compiled by an expert nutritionist/dietitian and incorporates ideas from many overweight people around the country. It is very flexible, is designed with men and women in mind and will help you select balanced healthy meals to suit your tastes.

Labels
Food labels often tell you how much total fat and saturated fat is in the product. Compare similar products, per 100g or per serving, and choose the lowest. See our food labelling leaflet which explains this further.

Foods labelled ‘low fat’ must, by law, contain less than half of the fat in the traditional product it is replacing. If it is ‘reduced fat’, it must contain less than three quarters. Products marked ‘diet’ or ‘healthy eating’ are often low in saturated fat.

Too thin?
If you start out at a healthy weight, cutting down on the saturated fat in your diet, without replacing the lost calories, might cause unwanted weight loss. At mealtimes include more oily fish, avocado pears and olive or rapeseed oil. These are high in the beneficial fats such as monounsaturated and omega 3 polyunsaturated, so provide quite a few calories. Try eating bigger helpings of breads, cereals (eg. breakfast cereals, pasta, rice, cous-cous) and potatoes. Also, have between-meal snacks of breads, unsalted nuts (almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, peanuts, pistachio and pecan), and dried fruit (raisins, dried apricots, prunes).

If you are overweight, remember that the amount, as well as the type of foods you eat is important.
Eating out can pose quite a problem, as you don’t know exactly what’s in the meals or how they are cooked. In reality, a lot of the food on offer in cafés and takeaway is likely to be higher in saturated fat than the food you eat at home. Don’t be afraid to ask about ingredients and cooking methods. If they’re proud of what they cook, they’ll be happy to advise you. Ask for a half portion of meat/main course with a double portion of vegetables or salad.

**At the café**
If the soups are home-made choose a vegetable-based soup (e.g. leek and potato, carrot and coriander or minestrone) with a crusty bread roll. Avoid creamy soups such as mushroom or chicken.

Choose a baked potato (no butter) with baked beans, vegetable chilli/curry, tuna without mayonnaise or cottage cheese and order a side salad. Watch out for too much cheddar cheese, coleslaw and rich meat sauces.

Enjoy a scone with jam (no butter) or a currant bun rather than a rich pastry, fresh cream cake or chocolate cake.

**At the burger bar**
Grilled chicken, fish or vegetarian burgers are a better bet than a hamburger. Or the small hamburger (child’s portion) means a lot less fat. Avoid the cheese.

If you insist on having fries, choose the small (regular) portion or share with a friend.

Instead of high fat milk shake, have fruit juice or sparkling water.

**At the Indian restaurant**
Choose chapatti or plain naan bread. Avoid any breads made with fat such as peshwari, paratha and puris. Ghee, the Indian cooking fat is similar to butter in its saturated fat content.

Choose drier dishes such as tandoori, karla and bhuna. Spinach based dishes (saag -) and chicken tikka are not too high in fat either. Vegetable dishes such as aloo gobi (potato and cauliflower curry) can be reasonably low in fat but check they’re not cooked in ghee.

Avoid creamy dishes such as korma, masala and dhansak and watch out for the ghee in duplaza, madras and vindaloo. Avoid oily dishes such as bhaji, samosa or pakhora.

Choose plain boiled rice. Pilau, biryani or fried rice are very high in fat.

**At the Chinese restaurant**
Have won-ton soup rather than pancake roll for starters.

Choose stir-fried rather than deep fried dishes. Have stir-fried vegetables, chicken and mushroom or chicken in black bean sauce. Avoid sweet and sour dishes, lemon chicken or crispy fried beef or duck. Satay and chow mein dishes are in between, with a medium fat content, so choose only as a special treat.

Go for plain rice or noodles. Avoid fried rice, prawn crackers or sesame prawn roll.

**At the Italian restaurant**
Go for bread sticks or plain crusty bread instead of garlic bread. Enjoy wonderful mixed salads or tomato salads with only a tiny splash of dressing.

Choose pasta with tomato, onion and basil based sauces. An example is arrabbiata sauce – tomato and chilli. Avoid creamy or cheese sauces and watch out for too much pesto. Have only a tiny sprinkling of fresh parmesan cheese, for flavour without too much fat.

Choose thin-based pizzas with vegetable toppings, ham, chicken or tuna. Avoid high fat meats like salami or pepperoni and watch out for too much cheese on top.

Traditional Italian meat dishes such as lasagne and spaghetti bolognese can be very high in fat. Have cannelloni instead as the spinach replaces some of the fatty meat.

**At the Mexican restaurant**
Chicken fajitas or Cajun chicken are probably the safest bets. Watch out for high fat enchiladas.

Have tomato-based salsa, sauces and dips, but watch out for sour cream. Refried beans and guacamole are a double edged sword. They have some good nutritional qualities but overall are high in fat, so go easy.