CUT THE SATURATED FAT

Mediterranean Mixed Vegetable Penne

BEATING HEART DISEASE TOGETHER
HELPFUL HINTS

Choosing healthier fats
There are two main types of fat in our diet – saturated fat and unsaturated fat. Too much saturated fat can increase the amount of cholesterol in the blood, which increases the risk of developing coronary heart disease.

Unsaturated fats are a healthier choice. They include monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats. These types of fats can actually improve cholesterol levels and provide us with the essential fatty acids that the body needs. They include the omega-3 polyunsaturated fats found in oily fish, which may help reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.

Another type of fat known as trans fats can also raise blood cholesterol levels. Trans fats are found naturally in very small amounts in dairy foods and meat. They are also formed when vegetable oils are partially ‘hydrogenated’ and used to make hard margarines and processed foods such as cakes, biscuits and pastries. If ‘partially hydrogenated oil or fat’ or ‘hydrogenated oil or fat’ appears in the ingredients list for a food, the food may contain trans fats.

To maintain a healthy heart, cut down on saturated fats and trans fats where possible. Unsaturated fats are a healthier choice.

Labels
Food labels usually tell you how much fat, and sometimes how much saturated fat, is in the product. Compare the amounts in similar products per 100g or per serving, and choose the lowest. (See our booklet Guide to food labelling which explains more about this.) As a guide to what is high and what is low per 100g of food:

- **High fat** is 20g or more per 100g.
- **High saturated fat** is 5g or more per 100g.
- **Low fat** is 3g or less per 100g.
- **Low saturated fat** is 1.5g or less per 100g.

Some food labels use a traffic-light signposting system to make it easy to see at a glance whether a product contains a high, medium or low amount of fat and saturated fat by carrying a red, amber or green traffic light respectively. Choose foods with a green traffic light for saturated fat whenever possible.

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Trying to lose weight?
All fats are high in energy (calories), so, if you are watching your weight, you need to limit all the fats that you eat. Also, if you are overweight, remember that the amount of food you eat, as well as the type of foods, is important. For more information on losing weight, see our booklet So you want to lose weight .... for good?

Too thin?
If you are underweight, you may need to put some weight on. Or, if you are already a healthy weight, cutting down on the saturated fat in your diet, without replacing the lost calories, might cause unwanted weight loss. If you need to put on some weight for either of these reasons, here are some ideas for you: At mealtimes, include more oily fish*, avocados, and olive oil or rapeseed oil. These foods provide quite a few calories and they are high in the beneficial fats – the unsaturated fats. Try eating bigger helpings of breads, cereals (eg, breakfast cereals, pasta, rice and cous-cous), and potatoes. Also, have between-meal snacks of unsalted nuts and seeds (eg, sesame seeds, flaxseeds, pumpkin seeds or sunflower seeds) and dried fruit (eg, raisins, or dried apricots or prunes).

* People are advised to have no more than 4 portions of oily fish a week, except for children, women of childbearing age and those who are pregnant or breastfeeding who should have no more than 2 portions a week.
EATING OUT AND TAKEAWAYS

If you are overweight, remember that the amount of food you eat, as well as the type of foods, is important.

Eating out or having a takeaway can pose quite a problem, as you don’t know exactly what’s in the meals or how they are cooked. A lot of the food on offer in cafés and takeaways 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 tell you. Ask for a half portion of meat or of main course with a double portion of vegetables or salad, and for vegetables to be served undressed and sauces and dressings to be provided separately so you can decide yourself how much to add.

At the café
If the soups are home-made, choose a vegetable-based soup such as leek and potato, carrot and coriander, or minestrone. Avoid creamy soups such as cream of mushroom or cream of chicken.

Choose a baked potato (without butter) and have it with baked beans, vegetable chilli, tuna (no 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 generally a better bet than a hamburger. Or a small hamburger (child’s portion) means a lot less saturated fat. Avoid the cheese.

If you do have fries, choose a small or regular-size portion rather than a large portion, or share a portion with a friend.

Instead of a milkshake, which can be high in saturated fat, have fruit juice or sparkling water.

Indian restaurant meals and takeaways
Ghee, the Indian cooking fat, has a similar saturated fat content to butter. Some curries can also be made with coconut oil, which is also high in saturated fat. Dishes that include the words kandhari, malai, korma or masala indicate dishes high in cream or coconut milk, so these are high in saturated fat.

Choose drier dishes such as tandoori, kari and bhuna.

Spinach-based dishes (saag) and chicken or beef tikka are not too high in saturated 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.

Watch out for the ghee in duppiaza, madras and vindaloo. Avoid oily dishes such as bhaji, samosa or pakhora.

Pilau, biryani or fried rice are higher in fat and saturated fat than plain boiled rice.

Choose baked breads such as chapati, roti or plain naan bread. Avoid any breads made with fat such as peshwari, paratha and puris.

Chinese restaurant meals and takeaways
For starters, choose won-ton or hot and sour soup rather than deep-fried dishes such as spring rolls, seaweed and prawn toast.

Choose steamed or stir-fried rather than deep-fried dishes. Have stir-fried vegetables, chicken and mushrooms, or chicken in black bean sauce. Avoid sweet and sour dishes (as the meat is often deep-fried). Lemon chicken or crispy-fried beef or duck. Satay and chow mein dishes are in between, with a medium fat content, so choose these only as a special treat.

Go for plain rice and noodles. Avoid fried rice and prawn crackers.

Italian restaurant meals and takeaway pizzas
Choose vegetable toppings, ham, chicken or tuna. Avoid having toppings of high-fat meats like salami or pepperoni and ask for less cheese on top. Avoid four-cheese pizzas too.

Choose pasta with a tomato-based sauce – for example, arrabbiata sauce, which has tomato and chilli. Avoid creamy or cheese sauces and watch out for too much pesto. Parmesan cheese is high in saturated fat, so have only a tiny sprinkling for flavour.

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

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.

Mexican restaurant meals and takeaways
Vegetable or chicken fajitas or Cajun chicken are probably the safest bets. Watch out for high-fat enchiladas.

Choose tomato-based salsa, sauces and dips and watch out for sour cream.

Fish and chip shops
Choose thick-cut chips rather than thin fries because they absorb less fat.

Try to have a smaller portion or share them with others.

Don’t add extra salt.

Avoid soggy batter and soggy chips as this is a sign that they have absorbed lots of fat from being cooked in oil at the incorrect temperature.

If you can get it, have fish coated in breadcrumbs rather than in batter, as it soaks up less fat.
About the British Heart Foundation
The British Heart Foundation is the nation’s heart charity, saving lives through pioneering research, patient care and vital information.

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