Who produced this leaflet?

This leaflet is produced by the Food Standards Agency — a UK-wide, independent Government agency, providing advice and information to the public and Government on food safety, nutrition and diet.

The Agency was created to protect the interests of consumers and its guiding principles are to:

- put the consumer first
- be open and accessible
- be an independent voice

The Agency's advice is based on the best scientific evidence available from independent expert advisory committees, and all its advice is made public.

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When you're trying to make a healthy choice, for most people the aim should be to eat more fruit and vegetables, and starchy foods such as bread, pasta and rice. And cut down on fat (especially saturates), salt and sugar.

Should I cut out all fat?

No, some fat in the diet is important for health. But eating too much is linked to becoming overweight and developing heart disease.

And for children under two, it's much more important to make sure they're getting enough calories and a variety of foods, than to worry about how much fat they're eating. So, for example, make sure you give your child full-fat milk and dairy foods until they're at least two. After the age of two, if your child is eating a broad range of foods, you can gradually switch to semi-skimmed milk. Skimmed milk isn't suitable as a main drink for under-fives.

What is the difference between saturates and unsaturates?

Saturates and unsaturates are the two main types of fat.

Saturates — This type of fat can increase the risk of heart disease because it raises blood cholesterol levels. So cut down on foods such as meat pies, sausages, butter, cheese, cakes, biscuits and foods containing coconut or palm oil, because all these can be high in saturates.

Unsaturates — Having unsaturates instead of saturates actually lowers blood cholesterol levels. There are two types of unsaturates — polyunsaturates and monounsaturates. Try to choose more foods high in unsaturates, rather than saturates, such as oily fish, sunflower oil, olive or rapeseed oils and spreads. However, you should still watch your total fat intake.

How do I cut down on fats?

Try to get most of your energy from starchy foods such as bread, pasta, rice, potatoes and cereals, which contain less than half the calories of fat (but you should watch how much added fat you use for cooking and serving these sorts of foods).

There are lots of other ways to reduce the amount of fat in your diet. Here are some suggestions:

- Choose lean cuts of meat and always trim off any fat.
- Choose lower-fat varieties of dairy foods, such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, reduced-fat cheese and lower-fat yoghurts.
- Cut down on foods containing a lot of saturated fats, such as meat products, crisps and cakes.
- Try boiling, steaming, grilling, poaching or microwaving food rather than frying or roasting.
- Try 'dry roasting', which is frying with no oil.

What about essential fatty acids?

There are two types — omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids and omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids — both are essential in small amounts in the diet.

Vegetable oils are a rich source of omega-6, which has a beneficial effect on cholesterol levels.

Oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, pilchards or herring are a rich source of omega-3. Fish oils have been shown to have beneficial effects upon coronary heart disease. You should aim to eat at least two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily fish.

What is a lot or a little?

If you want to make a healthy choice when you're choosing which products to buy, you might find it useful to check the nutrition information on the label.

You'll see figures for the fat content on many food labels. And you can use this table as a guide to help you judge whether the food contains a lot or a little fat. If the amount is between the figures given here, this is a moderate amount.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Fat</th>
<th>Amount per 100g</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skimmed</td>
<td>0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skimmed</td>
<td>5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-fat</td>
<td>10g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is a LOT of fat 20g or more per 100g
5g saturates or more per 100g

This is a LITTLE fat 3g fat or less per 100g
1g saturates or less per 100g