

Reading Selection

Some Good News about Fat

Have you heard the good news about fat? Gram per gram, fat is just about the most energy-packed source of food for your body. The bad news about fat is that it's easy to get too much of it. And too much fat can be bad for your health.

A gram of fat contains more than two times as much energy as a gram of carbohydrate (starch and glucose) or protein. Fat causes you to feel full after you eat it. It also helps protect your bones and cushion your organs. And, the fat tissue in your body stores some of the vitamins you need.

If you were an explorer trudging through the Arctic wilderness, you'd choose a diet with lots of fat in it—for example, one with nuts, fatty meats, and chocolate. Remember, fat gives you a lot of energy for its weight. So you could lighten your backpack by carrying less food.

Also, these foods would help to keep you warm. How? Your body stores the fat it doesn't use for energy. That fat works like an extra sweater to insulate you from the cold.

On the other hand, if you worked in an office and spent most of the day sitting at a desk, you probably would cut down on your fatty foods. You wouldn't need the extra energy, and your body would most likely just store the fat rather than use it.

Some fatty foods have a bad reputation, and for valid reasons. Still, you don't want to stop eating fat completely. A healthy diet should include fat, but the amount should vary based on factors such as your age, total weight, and individual needs.

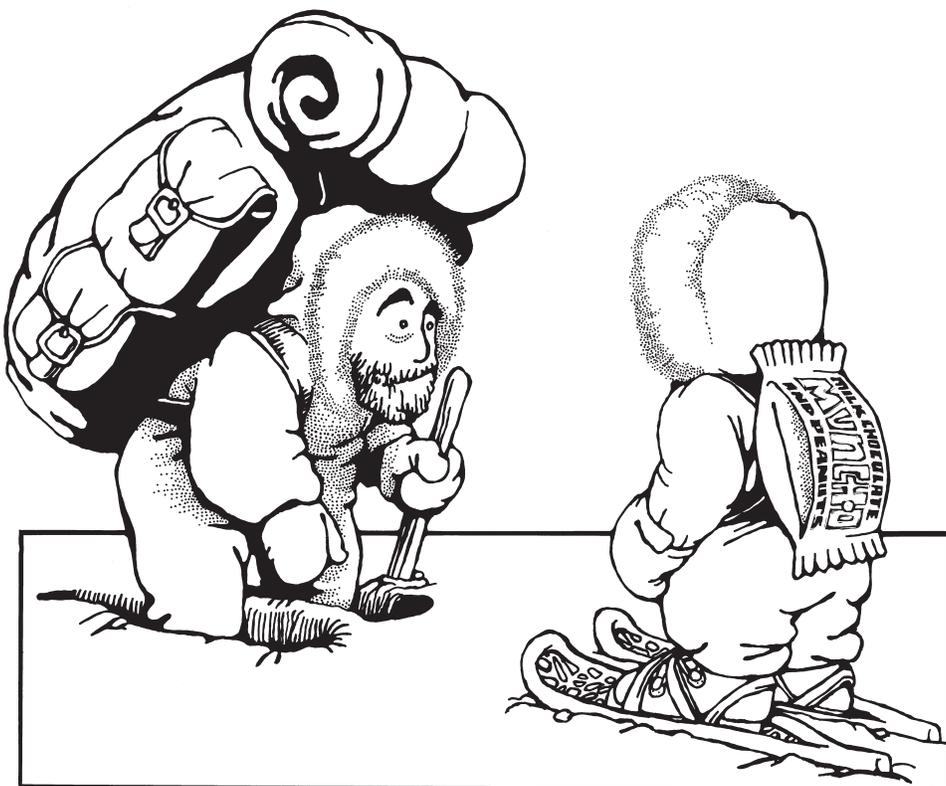
All Fats Are Not Equal

When are fats considered “bad”? When they cause health problems. Saturated fats are the

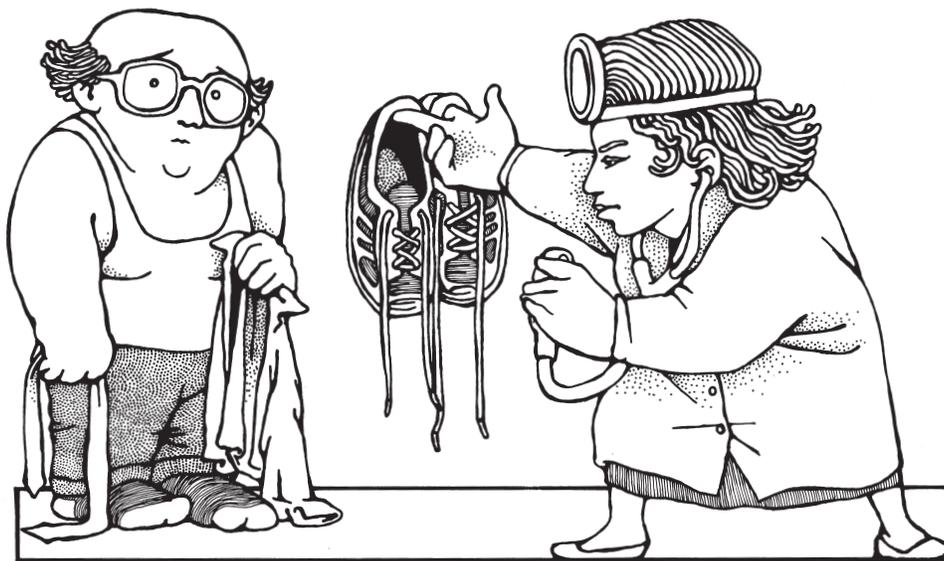
fats which cause concern for many people. Saturated fats are found in both plants and animals, but primarily in animals.

So, think about this for a moment. Do you eat a bunch of foods fried in animal fats like lard or butter? Do you frequently eat eggs, cheese, or ice cream? These contain saturated fats. And saturated fats may raise the level of cholesterol in your blood.

Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like substance found in all your body's cells. It's an important part of a healthy body, and



your liver actually makes some cholesterol on its own. But if the saturated fats you eat add to the body's production of cholesterol, it can build up in your arteries. This causes your heart to work too hard to pump your blood. Over time, it can increase the risk of heart disease.



Keep in mind that high cholesterol affects some people more than others. As you grow older, your doctor may suggest that you

exercise regularly, cut down on high-fat foods, and have your level of cholesterol and triglycerides (fat) in your blood checked.

Unsaturated fats include cooking oils from seeds, nuts, and vegetables. They usually remain liquid at room temperature. And a number of nutritionists believe that

unsaturated fats give your body the “good” fat it needs.

Today, it may seem like any amount of fat is bad. At the supermarket, shoppers reach for foods that are nonfat, or 98% fat-free. And we constantly see advertisements telling us we need to diet. But the simple fact is that a small amount of fat is necessary in the diet. You just shouldn't overdo it. And when

you do eat fat, you should try to eat more of the unsaturated kind.