

11 DIETARY
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PRINCIPLES

**Enjoy saturated fats;
avoid industrial seed oils.**



Total fat content of traditional diets varies from 30 percent to 80 percent of calories but only about 4 percent of calories come from poly-unsaturated oils naturally occurring in grains, legumes, nuts, fish, animal fats and vegetables. The balance of fat calories is in the form of saturated and monounsaturated fatty acids.

Seventh Principle

How much fat should we eat? There's a lot of variation in traditional diets. For the Inuit, fat can comprise up to 80 percent of dietary calories; for some groups in Africa, fat content is much lower, probably in the range of 30 percent. Whatever the level in the diet, these fats are mostly animal fats or highly saturated coconut or palm oil.

Some people do very well on high-fat diets—they stabilize blood sugar and maximize the assimilation of fat-soluble nutrients. Others have trouble digesting lipids and feel better on a diet that is lower in fat. Most people do best when fat contributes between 40 to 60 percent of total calories. For a diet of 2400 calories per day, that translates to about ten tablespoons of fat, including the fat on meat, in egg yolks, and in whole dairy products, in addition to cooking fat and added fat like butter.

Our bodies definitely need the saturated and monounsaturated fat that we get from animal fats and traditional oils obtained from olives, coconuts or palm fruit—we need these fats for everything from cell membrane integrity, to mitochondria function, energy storage and hormone production. If we do not get enough of these fats from our diet, the body can make them out of carbohydrate foods. Since there is a limit to the amount of protein we should ingest—no more than 20 percent of calories—the remaining 80 percent of calories must be divided between fats and carbohydrates. If we lower the amount of fat we eat, the deficit must be made up with carbohydrates.

Getting our fat from carbohydrates can work in the context of a diet where the animal foods supply adequate fat-soluble vitamins. In many regions of Africa, animal food and fat consumption is low, but the animal foods they do eat are rich in nutrients—foods like insects, dried whole fish, shrimp pastes and organ meats. These foods are not appealing to Western palates, but fortunately in the West, we have access to many sources of animal fat—from the fat on our meat to whole dairy products, and to butter, egg yolks and cooking fats.

As we have seen, the ideal diet contains a wide variety of animal and plant foods; the ideal diet also contains a wide variety of saturated and monounsaturated fats—meat fats including lard and tallow, poultry fats, egg yolks, butter and whole dairy products, along with olive oil, coconut oil and palm oil.

Traditional cultures consumed many sources of saturated and mono-unsaturated fats; what they did not consume was seed oils containing high levels of polyunsaturated fatty acids. Unfortunately, most modern people are getting most of their fats from these unstable oils—something completely new to the human diet. While we need small amounts of polyunsaturated oils in our diet, too much can lead to imbalances on the cellular level; and a surfeit of polyunsaturated fatty acids from vegetable oil has been implicated in most of today's chronic disease, from heart disease and cancer to infertility and premature aging.

Polyunsaturated oils are major ingredients in all processed foods, in cooking oils, and in margarines, shortenings and spreads. In fact, about 30 percent of calories in modern diets come from these rancid and industrially manipulated oils. They have no place in the human diet. Only about 4 percent of calories should come from polyunsaturates. We can get the small amounts of polyunsaturated fatty acids (called essential fatty acids) we need as part of the food we eat and from animal fats and healthy traditional oils extracted from olives, coconuts and palm fruit.

Seventh Principle

For further information:

Articles

- Articles on the basics of fats and oils:
westonaprice.org/know-your-fats/basics-on-fats-and-oils/
- Articles on fats: westonaprice.org/know-your-fats/
- Articles on saturated fats:
westonaprice.org/know-your-fats/saturated-fats/
- Articles on coconut oil:
westonaprice.org/know-your-fats/coconut-oil/
- All Those New Oils by Sally Fallon Morell: nourishingtraditions.com/all-those-new-oils/

Brochures

- Butter is Better (English, Spanish and Danish); Myths & Truths about Cholesterol (English and Spanish); Dangers of Fats & Oils
westonaprice.org/about-us/brochures/

Wise Traditions Podcast westonaprice.org/podcast/

- Episode 75: Principle 7: How Much Fat Should We Eat? with Sally Fallon Morell
- Episode 258: “Fat is Where It’s At” with Sally Fallon Morell
- Episode 263: “The Hateful Eight” (on industrial seed oils) with Cate Shanahan

Video

- Saturated fats, polyunsaturated oils and omega-3 and 6:
westonaprice.org/category/video/saturated-fats-polyunsaturated-oils-and-omega-3-and-6/