♥ ♥ ♥ from Judee, Our Parish Nurse — March 16, 2008

NUTRITION FACT SHEET

Balancing Calories and Optimizing Fats

Fats and oils are essential to a nutritious diet. They play an important role in the foods we eat—from enhancing favor, texture, moistness, and overall meal satisfaction, to providing healthful heart benefits. Fats and oils are also a key part of the diet and a cornerstone of proper growth and development.

For decades, the conventional wisdom has been that low-fat diets are the best approach for reducing weight and lowering the risk of coronary heart disease. As a result, many people have become confused about fats and their role in a healthy diet. In fact, according to a recent survey from the International Food Information Council Foundation, three out of four people do not believe that fats can be healthy.

It's important to understand that the types of fats we choose are as important as the amount of fats we eat. Categorizing fats as either "more desirable" or "less desirable" can make it easier to choose more healthful foods.

Fats and Health: An Essential Connection

More desirable fats, including polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats:

- supply the body with energy
- provide essential fatty acids such as omega-3 polyunsaturated fat and omega-6 polyunsaturated fat
- serve as carriers for the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K.

Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats are found in vegetable oils such as olive, canola, and soybean oils. Omega-3 polyunsaturated fat is also found in seafood like fish and shellfish. Replacing saturated fats with polyunsaturated fats may help maintain heart health.

> The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend keeping total fat between 20 to 35 percent of total calories; polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats should be the primary sources of dietary fat.

Limiting the Impact of Less Desirable Fats

The less desirable fats—saturated fat and trans fat—are the primary culprits that create negative associations about fats and poor health, particularly heart health.

Saturated fats are solid or nearly solid at room temperature. All animal fats (meat, poultry and dairy) contain saturated fat. These fats can raise blood cholesterol levels, increasing the risk of heart disease. The Dietary Guidelines recommend that saturated fats be kept below 10 percent of total calories in the diet.

Trans fats are also naturally present in meat and dairy products, though in small amounts. Most trans fats are created through a manufacturing process that turns oils into a solid fat. Trans fats "behave" like saturated fats, remaining solid at room temperature. Trans fats may raise LDL (bad) cholesterol levels while decreasing HDL (good)

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cholesterol, which together can increase the risk of heart disease. There is no recommended daily allowance for trans fats because the body does not need them. It is best to either avoid foods with trans fats or choose foods that are low in trans fats.

Going Beyond Olive Oil

For some time, the Mediterranean diet – known for being rich in olive oil and high in monounsaturated fats—has been regarded as a healthy and desirable way to eat. But it's not just olive oil that deserves the spotlight for healthy oils and fats. Canola, peanut, sunflower and soybean oil also contain the more desirable fats essential to maintaining a healthy diet. Many of these oils are in products that were once considered less than healthy. For example, mayonnaise is now made from oils like soybean and canola oil. Mayonnaise that is low in saturated fat, has no trans fat, and contains omega-3 and omega-6 polyunsaturated fats can be part of a healthy, balanced diet.

Striking the Right Balance

Two out of three Americans are overweight, so it's no surprise that watching calories is top-of-mind for many people. But be careful not to cut out potentially healthful foods from your diet. It's important to select foods wisely to lower calories while still meeting the recommendations for polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. Eliminating or reducing your intake of saturated and trans fats can be challenging. However, making healthy choices doesn't mean you must eliminate your favorite foods or ingredients entirely. Start by reading the Nutrition Facts panel on food labels. Check the calories, total fat, saturated fat and trans fat per serving. Replace less desirable fats with polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats by looking for products that have been made from oils such as canola, olive, sunflower, and soybean oils rather than butter, lard, or partially hydrogenated oils.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 120
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 13g	20%
Saturated Fat 5g	25%
Trans Fat 2g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 660mg	28%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A 4%	Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 15%	Iron 4%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

For a referral to a registered dietitian and for additional food and nutrition information visit WWW.EATRIGHT.ORG

What's your most valuable source of good nutrition? Registered Dietitians are the experts when it comes to helping people eat well and stay healthy. An RD has the knowledge and expertise to develop an eating plan to meet the needs of all individuals.

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