

# Live Healthy Georgia— Seniors Taking Charge

## The Lowdown on Fat, Sodium, and Added Sugars

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By Lauren Badger, BS

We have all heard that too much fat, sodium, and sugar are not good for our health, but why is this? In this newsletter, we will explore fats, sodium, and added sugars and how they affect our bodies.

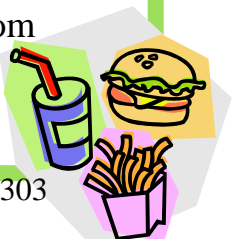
### Fats

Fats are part of a healthy diet. They provide energy, help carry certain nutrients, and make up structures in the body. However, when consumed in excess, some fats can be harmful to your body. These fats include saturated and trans-fats and cholesterol, which can increase your risk of heart disease. The recommended amount of total dietary fats is 20-35% of total calories. Be sure to keep your saturated fat less than 10% of your total caloric intake (7% for some individuals), trans-fat as low as possible, and dietary fat cholesterol intake less than 300 mg. Foods high in saturated fats are mainly animal products and include regular (full-fat) cheeses, pizza, grain-based desserts, dairy-based desserts, and meat products such as chicken,

sausage, bacon, and beef. Trans-fats are found in partially hydrogenated oils in some margarines, snack foods, and prepared desserts and also in small amounts in meat and milk products. Cholesterol is found in animal products, including eggs, chicken, and beef. One way to reduce bad fats is to choose “liquid” fats over “solid” fats, for example vegetable oil over lard. Liquid fats include plant-based oils such as canola and olive oil that contain healthy fats that may actually be good for your heart. Another way to reduce intake is to select lean meats and low-fat dairy products and to avoid foods high in saturated and trans-fats and cholesterol.

### Sodium

Sodium is a necessary nutrient and plays an important role in many of the body’s processes. However, too much sodium can increase your blood pressure, which can therefore increase your risk of heart and kidney disease. In the diet, we consume sodium as salt. However, in America, most individuals get their sodium from





processed foods, not from salt added during cooking or at the table. Americans consume the most sodium in yeast breads, chicken dishes, pizza, pasta dishes, cold cuts, and condiments, which proves the importance of reading the Nutrition Facts label. The recommended amount of sodium is less than 2,300 mg per day for most adults, although it is less than 1,500 mg for those greater than 51 years of age and those of any age who are African-American or have high blood pressure (hypertension), diabetes, or chronic kidney disease. To reduce your intake, check sodium on the Nutrition Facts label on the side or back of your food product, eat fresher and less processed foods, and use salt-free seasonings when cooking.

### **Added Sugars**

Some sugars are found naturally in fruits and milk products; these sugars are present with other important nutrients and healthy components. However, most sugars consumed in America are those added in processing, food preparation, and at the table. Although these sugars may make the products more desirable and at times help preserve them, it is important to control your intake of added sugars. Although a sugar is a sugar to your body, whether naturally occurring or added, added sugars often give calories but do not give many essential nutrients or dietary fiber like most naturally occurring sugars.

Therefore, added sugars can lead to weight gain, which has further health complications. Excessive sugar intake of any kind can also lead to dental caries. Examples of added sugars include white sugar, high fructose corn syrup, brown sugar, corn syrup, raw sugar, maple syrup, fructose sweetener, honey, and molasses. Products that are high in added sugars include sodas, energy drinks, sports drinks, desserts, sugar-sweetened fruit drinks, and candy.

### **Follow a Healthy Diet**

As always, whenever a healthy dietary pattern consisting of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, lean meats and proteins, and healthy fats is followed, your risks of certain diseases are decreased.

For more information on healthy meal planning, visit:

- MyPyramid, an interactive, healthy-eating website:  
[www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)
- “Your Guide to Lowering Your Blood Pressure with DASH” ( or Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension):  
[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new\\_dash.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf)

Reference: Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010. Chapter 3: Foods and Food Components to Reduce. <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-PolicyDocument.htm> .

