

# TRAINING DIET

## Fat – Get the Essentials



**Question:** (Answer at the bottom of the page)

Fat provides more than twice as much energy (Calories) as the same weight of protein or carbohydrate.

- TRUE       FALSE

### **Fat in the Diet**

Fat is present in many foods. Sometimes it is easy to see the fat in the food such as meat, poultry, and margarine. This is called 'visible' fat. Some fat is part of foods like nuts, seeds, eggs, cheese, bakery products (cookies and cake), and processed food (chips, crackers, chocolate). The fat in these foods is difficult to see and is described as 'invisible' or 'hidden' fat.

About 1/3 of the fat in the Canadian diet is from added oils and fat. These Calories are added to food in the processing (potato chips), during cooking (French fries), or on your plate (margarine on a baked potato).

**Question:** (Answer at the bottom of the page)

A fat-free diet is good for your body.

- TRUE       FALSE

### **Fat is Stored Energy and More**

Plants and animals (including humans) store extra energy as fat. This stored fat can be used for energy to grow or to work. Before a growth spurt children gain weight, and during steady endurance activity fat is an important fuel for muscles. Still, the body always uses some carbohydrate (glucose or glycogen) for energy.

Dietary fat supplies energy, essential fatty acids, fat soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K) and protects internal organs. Every cell in the body needs some fat and fat makes food taste good.

To ensure you get the right kinds of fat in your diet, include a small amount – 30-45ml (2-3 Tbsp) of unsaturated fat each day. This includes oil used for cooking, salad dressing, and margarine\*.

Fat in food supplies more than twice as many Calories of energy (9 Calories/gram) compared to carbohydrate and protein (4 Calories/gram). Too much dietary fat may prevent eating enough carbohydrate. To eat the essentials without too much, follow these simple guidelines:

- Choose vegetable oils such as canola, olive or soybean oil and margarines \*made from these oils. Limit mayonnaise, butter, rich creamy sauces, and deep fried foods.
- Cook food with only a little added fat and allow the fat to drain off (broiling, roasting on a rack, barbecuing).
- Trim fat from meat and skin from poultry.
- Select lower fat cheeses, vinaigrette dressings, and broth soups, rather than the high fat creamy types.
- Look for crackers, cookies, and snack bars with less than 3 g fat/30 g serving.
- Limit high fat snack foods like pastries, muffins, chocolate, fries, and alcohol.

Food sources of essential fats include nuts and nut butters, seeds, canola oil, olive oil, avocado, flax seed, roasted soy nuts, and fatty fish.

For more information on the fat content of food, check the "[Fat Finder](#)" and use it as a guide.

If you are interested in changing your body weight, check the nutrition tip sheets for "[Losing Weight for Athletes](#)" or "[Gaining Weight for Athletes](#)".

Coaches and athletes who want more detailed information on food selection for their sport should contact a registered dietitian with expertise in sport. You can contact the dietitian at your [Canadian Sport Centre](#) or someone listed under the [Sport Nutrition Registry](#) on the CAC website. If there is no dietitian with expertise in sport listed in your area, [Dietitians of Canada](#) may list a dietitian near where you live.

**SNAC** Sport Nutrition Advisory Committee  
Comité consultatif sur la nutrition sportive

ANSWERS:

1. TRUE – One gram of fat provides 9 Calories compared to 4 Calories in 1 gram of protein or carbohydrate.

2. FALSE – A fat-free diet is not good for your body! Fat is necessary as a source of energy, essential fatty acids, and fat-soluble vitamins.

