

Making Foods with Less Fat and Sugar

Fat and sugar are added to foods to give them texture, flavour, sweetness, colour, and moisture. However, too much fat and sugar in your diet is not good for your health.

Make your favourite recipes healthier by adding less fat and sugar to them. Decrease the fat and sugar in your recipes using the ideas in this handout. When you change a recipe, it's a good idea to change one ingredient at a time to see if you like the taste and texture.

Cooking with less fat

- Choose lean cuts of meat and remove any visible fat. Remove the skin from chicken and turkey.
- Use low fat cooking methods such as:
 - baking
 - steaming
 - barbequing
 - boiling
 - poaching
 - grilling
 - microwaving
 - roasting on a grill so fat can drip off
 - sautéing or stir-frying with broth or juice instead of oil
 - slow cooking in a crock pot
- Drain the fat left over from cooking. Drain browned ground beef in a strainer and rinse with hot water.
- Chill gravy, stews, or soup until the fat hardens on top. Remove the fat layer and throw it in the garbage.
- Dip fish filets or skinless chicken pieces in plain yogurt or 1% buttermilk. Roll in seasoned breadcrumbs and bake.
- Use cheese with a strong-flavour, such as old cheddar or Parmesan in cooking. Use only half the amount asked for in the recipe. You can also try reduced-fat cheeses. When a recipe calls for feta cheese, use half feta and half dry or 1% cottage cheese.

- Replace sour cream with low fat plain yogurt in sauces and dips. Low fat plain yogurt has a better texture than low fat sour cream when heated.
- Replace some of the meat in recipes with extra vegetables or legumes like pinto, navy or kidney beans, lentils, or chickpeas.
- Replace ground beef in a recipe with vegetarian ground “meat”, or ground chicken, or turkey.
- Make cream sauces or soups less often.
- Use low fat evaporated milk instead of cream.
- Make marinades with little or no oil.
- Try flavouring foods with spices, herbs, lemon, vinegar, wine, or sherry instead of serving with high fat sauces such as Alfredo or butter chicken sauce.

Cooking with less sugar

- Use less sugar when making sauces.
- Ready-made sauces such as sweet and sour, honey garlic sauce, and ketchup are high in sugar. Use them less often and in smaller amounts.
- Make your own marinades for meats instead of using bottled sauces.
- Try flavouring foods with spices, herbs, lemon, vinegar, wine, or sherry instead of bottled sauces.
- Try using Splenda[®] instead of sugar in recipes.

Note: The *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth* say that children should not have artificial sweeteners.

Health Canada recommends that pregnant women not use the sweeteners cyclamate and saccharin.

Baking with less fat

- Use pureed fruit or yogurt instead of fat in recipes. Replacing fat will change the texture. Start by replacing only half the fat. For example, instead of ½ cup (125 mL) margarine, use ¼ cup (60 mL) fruit puree and ¼ cup (60 mL) non-hydrogenated margarine.
- Replace half the butter or oil with a lentil purée. For recipes visit the Alberta Pulse Growers web site at www.pulse.ab.ca, and go to the Consumers page.
- You can reduce the amount of oil in a recipe. For example, instead of 1 cup (250 mL) of oil, use ⅔ or ¾ cup (150 or 175 mL).
- Use half the amount of nuts, coconut, or chocolate chips in a recipe and still keep the taste. Toast the nuts to boost their flavour.

Healthy tip

When you use fat or oil, choose healthier fats such as non-hydrogenated margarine, canola oil, or olive oil in small amounts.

Muffins, quick breads, and cakes

- Replace whole milk or cream with low fat buttermilk, plain yogurt, low fat evaporated milk, skim or 1% milk, low fat soy milk, or fat-free or low fat sour cream.
- Replace part or all of the fat with an equal amount of pureed fruit such as prunes, peaches, pears, bananas, or applesauce.
- Some cooked, pureed vegetables such as pureed squash, sweet potato, and pumpkin also work well in baking. You can replace part or all the fat with these.
- Sprinkle some powdered icing sugar on cooled cakes instead of using icing.
- Use lower fat cream cheese when making cheesecake.

Cookies

- Cookies need some fat so they can spread out during baking. A little fat is also needed so they stay chewy or crispy and do not break apart.
- Try replacing half the fat with the same amount of applesauce or pureed prunes.
- Make small, rather than large cookies.

Pies

It is hard to replace the fat in a pastry crust so try the following:

- Use only a bottom crust and no top crust.
- Make fruit crisps instead of pie.
- Try a crumb crust made of graham, vanilla, or chocolate wafers, or gingersnap crumbs.

Baking with less sugar

- Choose recipes that have less sugar.
- Try cutting down on the sugar, syrup, or molasses in your recipes. For example, instead of 1 cup (250 mL) of these, use ⅔ or ¾ cup (150 or 175 mL).
- Fruit puree used to lower the fat in a recipe will also help to sweeten your baked good.
- Fresh berries or dried fruits (cherries, raisins, apricots) can add sweetness to a recipe when you have decreased the amount of sugar.
- Reduce sugar by half in muffin, loaf, or cookie recipes. Some or all of the sugar you leave out can be replaced with an artificial sweetener.
- Replace some or all of the sugar in pies, cheesecake, fruit crisps, and puddings with an artificial sweetener.
- Artificial sweeteners that work in the heat of baking include sucralose (Splenda®) and cyclamates (Sugar Twin®, Sweet 'n' Low®).
- You can use aspartame (Equal®) if the temperature is less than 400 °F (200 °C) for less than 50 minutes.
- Mix the artificial sweetener with either the liquid ingredients or the dry ingredients before mixing the liquid and dry ingredients together.
- Add extra vanilla, almond extract, or spices to increase the flavour of lower sugar cookies, puddings, and custards.
- Artificial sweeteners will not activate yeast. Keep at least 2 tsp (10 mL) of sugar in recipes that use yeast.

Baking tips

Pans

- Non-stick pans or parchment paper will help prevent sticking and help with browning. You can also coat your pan with flour or corn meal.

Ingredients

- Don't use light or calorie-reduced margarine in baking. These have more water, which changes the final product.
- Sift your flour or use cake or pastry flour. Unsifted regular flour can be too heavy for low fat baking.

Mixing

- Take care when mixing. Over-mixing can make your baked goods tough and full of tunnels.

Oven temperature

- Lower the oven temperature so your low fat baking does not become dry. Some suggested temperatures are:
 - Muffins at 350 °F (180 °C)
 - Quick breads and cakes at 325 °F to 350 °F (160 °C to 180 °C)
 - Cookies at 275 °F to 300 °F (135 °C to 150 °C)
 - Brownies, biscuits and scones at 375 °F (190 °C)

Baking time

- Watch baking time closely. Over-cooked low fat baked goods will be dry.
- Baked goods made with less sugar may not brown as much. For a deeper golden-brown colour, lightly spray the batter or dough with cooking spray just before placing in the oven.
- Low fat baked goods have moist, shiny tops and might look underdone.
- When quick breads, muffins, or cakes are done, edges should be lightly browned and start to peel away from the sides of the pan.
- Some quick breads may develop a large crack down the top when they are done.

Try these great substitutions...

Instead of:	Try:
Chocolate, baking 1 oz (30 g)	3 tbsp (45 mL) cocoa and 1½ tsp (8 mL) oil
Nuts, chopped 1 cup (250 mL)	½ cup (125 mL) toasted nuts
Egg 1 whole	2 egg whites or ¼ cup (60 mL) fat-free egg substitute
Cream cheese 8 oz (250 g)	8 oz (250 g) light or fat-free cream cheese
Sour cream 1 cup (250 mL)	1 cup (250 mL) low fat or fat-free sour cream or plain yogurt
Cheese, regular (more than 20% milk fat or MF)	lower fat cheese (part-skim, skim or low fat cheeses, less than 20% MF), or use small amounts of a strong flavoured cheese (old cheddar or Parmesan)
Cream, heavy 1 cup (250 mL)	1 cup (250 mL) evaporated skim milk
Cream, whipped 1 cup (250 mL)	1 cup (250 mL) non-fat yogurt with vanilla or almond extract
Butter, shortening, lard or margarine 1 cup (250 mL)	1 cup (250 mL) pureed fruit, low fat buttermilk or yogurt or ¾ cup (175 mL) oil
Butter, shortening, lard or margarine ½ cup (125 mL)	½ cup (125 mL) pureed fruit, low fat buttermilk or yogurt or ⅓ cup (75 mL) oil
Butter, shortening, lard or margarine ¼ cup (60 mL)	¼ cup (60 mL) pureed fruit, low fat buttermilk or yogurt or 2 Tbsp (30 mL) oil
Milk, whole 1 cup (250 mL)	1 cup (250 mL) low fat buttermilk or skim milk or ⅓ cup (75 mL) skim milk powder and 1 cup (250 mL) water
Sugar, white or brown, 1 cup (250 mL)	½ cup (125 mL) Splenda® artificial sweetener
Brown sugar, 1 cup (250 mL)	½ cup (125 mL) Splenda® Brown Sugar Blend

Reference: Secrets of Fat Free Baking, Sandra Woodruff RD
Canola Information Services, The HeartCare Program

Storage

- Store low fat, baked goods in a closed, plastic container or wrapped in plastic wrap or foil for 1 to 2 days at room temperature.
- Baked goods with icing or filling need to be stored in the fridge.
- Plastic containers or foil hold in moisture better than plastic wrap.
- Cookies store best in zip tight plastic bags.
- Low fat baked goods, wrapped in plastic wrap, then wrapped in foil and placed in a zip tight bag, can be frozen for up to 2 months.

Suggested cookbooks and websites

Check your library or bookstore for cookbooks with healthy recipes. Many websites and magazines also have healthy recipe and menu ideas. A few of these cookbooks and websites are below.

Cookbooks

Cook Great Food, Simply Great Food or Cook! (2002, 2007, 2011) – Dietitians of Canada

- Fast, tasty, healthy recipes.

Lighthearted Cooking series (2004, 2005, 2010)

– Anne Lindsay

The Looneyspoons Collection (2011) – Janet and Greta Podleski

Canada's Diabetes Meals for Good Health (2008)

– Karen Graham

- Menus for a month and tips on healthy living.

Choice Menus (2004, 2007, 2008)

– Marjorie Hollands & Margaret Howard

- Cookbooks for diabetes that have menus and recipes.

Complete Canadian Diabetes Cookbook (2005)

– Katherine Younker

Alberta Health and Wellness

www.healthyalberta.com → click on Healthy Eating and then Recipes.

Some recipes on this site are designed to teach kids how to cook and try new foods.

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

www.heartandstroke.com

This website has lots of healthy lifestyle, nutrition, and physical activity information. It also has many recipes. You can search for the type of recipe you want.

Dietitians of Canada

www.eatracker.ca → click on Recipe Analyzer.

This tool analyzes your recipes. It will tell you how much of 23 nutrients are in each serving of your recipe. Other tools on this site will check your food and activity choices and help you with meal planning.