

Cent\$ible Nutrition News

Helping Families Eat Better for Less

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Is fat free always a healthy choice?

In the age of social media where everything must have an “easy” or instant solution, going fat-free is often marketed as the “magic pill” for making healthy choices. But when it comes to overall health, is choosing fat-free always a healthy option?

What’s on a Label?

Products often make claims about the health of our food, but these claims can sometimes be confusing. To make any legitimate health claim on a food label, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires food manufacturers to meet certain guidelines. Some of the most common claims on products around fat are the following:

- **Reduced Fat/Less Fat:** 25% less fat total than the regular product
- **Light/Lite:** 50% less fat total than the regular product
- **Low Fat:** Less than 3 grams per serving

- **Fat Free:** Less than .5g of fat per serving
- **Low Saturated Fat:** Less than 1g of saturated fat per serving

Even if a food is low in fat, it does not mean it is also low in calories. Some products add sugar, salt, or fillers to make the food taste better with less fat. All fats are also not created equal. For healthy individuals 2 years and older, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025 suggests limiting calories that come from saturated fats and choosing more foods with unsaturated fats.

Making Healthy Choices Around Fats

Check the Label

- Choose products that have 3g of saturated fat or less per serving.
- Be aware fat-free products does not mean “calorie free” or “sugar free”

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Is fat-free healthy? Continued

Focus on Healthy Fats, Limit Saturated Fats

- Choose protein options like lean cuts of beef or pork, chicken, with the skin removed and add fish like salmon, tuna, and sardines to your diet. Choose low fat or fat free dairy or dairy alternatives.

Focus on Plant Foods

- Eat a variety of nuts, seeds, beans, peas, lentils, and soy foods with little to no fat added.
- Choose oils over “solid” fats like corn, canola, safflower, olive, and peanut.

Add Flavor

- Using marinades and dressings, made with unsaturated fats or seasonings, and baking or steaming your food can boost the flavor without frying foods in excess fat.

Understanding the recommendations and claims around fat can help you make better choices for you and your family.

Sources

U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020. Available at [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov).

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2021.) Rethink Fats. Retrieved January 27, 2022 from <https://www.myplate.gov/tip-sheet/rethink-fats>

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CNP Vinaigrettes

Citrus Vinaigrette

½ cup canola oil, 3 Tablespoons lemon juice, 1 teaspoon dried grated orange or lemon peel, 1 Tablespoon orange juice, salt and black pepper to taste

Garlic Mustard Vinaigrette

½ cup canola oil, 3 Tablespoons red wine vinegar, 1 Tablespoon Dijon mustard, 1 teaspoon minced garlic, 1 Tablespoon honey, salt and black pepper to taste

Herb Vinaigrette

½ cup olive oil, 3 Tablespoons lemon juice, 1 teaspoon oregano and basil, salt and black pepper to taste

Italian Vinaigrette

½ cup vegetable oil, 3 Tablespoons white vinegar, 1 teaspoon Italian Seasoning

Vinaigrettes Can Be Used In Many Ways

- Add to any cold or warm salad, green salads, pasta salads, fruit salads, vegetable salads, and bean salads.
- Add to coleslaw mix or sliced cabbage and carrots for your own slaw.
- Use to marinate fresh vegetables several hours or overnight in a bowl or resealable plastic bag in the refrigerator. Try green beans, jicama, mushrooms, onion slices, tomatoes, yellow squash, or zucchini. Discard marinade after use.
- Use to marinate beef, game, fish, tofu, or chicken. Add soy sauce, if desired. Marinate several hours or overnight in a bowl or resealable plastic bag in the refrigerator. Discard marinade after use. If basting meat while cooking, use fresh marinade.
- Pour over sliced vegetables and let sit about 30 minutes in the refrigerator before roasting, grilling, or broiling.