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Fat is Fuel

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Dietary fat o4en gets a bad reputation because we associate fat in our food with fat on our bodies. But fats are not all bad! Just like carbohydrate and protein, fat is an essential macronutrient necessary for overall health and body functions. The key to optimal fat utilization by the body is understanding which fats to choose, when to consume them, and how much depending on body size and exercise demands.

Functions of Fats:

- Provides energy during long duration, low to moderate intensity exercise.
- Adipose tissue (stored fat) cushions and insulated our internal organs.
- Encircles nerves and plays a role in sending messages throughout the body.
- Forms the outer wall of every cell in your body and aids in cell function.
- Provides flavor and texture to food and meals.
- Allows for absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K)
- Omega 3 fatty acids (found in in fish, avocado, olive oil, and nuts) can help improve heart health and reduce inflammation in the body, so considered "nature's Ibuprofen"

Types of Fat and Food Sources:

- Saturated Fats
  - Usually solid at room temperature, and lead to high cholesterol and heart disease
    - Limit to < 10% of total fat consumption per day, this includes trans fats and even coconut oil.
    - In animal products (meat, dairy, egg yolk), processed foods and baked goods.
- Unsaturated Fats
  - Mono and Poly unsaturated fats are fluid at room temperature (Omega FAs too)
  - In Fish, Plants, and Vegetable Oils: nuts, seeds, avocado, canola, olive, sesame oils

Tips & Tactics

- Choose LEAN meat and limit red meat consumption to once per week. Too much saturated fat, as found in animal products, can increase cholesterol and increase risk for heart disease. Aim for plant proteins as much as possible!
- Opt for low-no fat dairy, 1oz cheese servings, and use butter sparingly (EVOO instead!).
- Skip PROCESSED foods, as trans fats can clog arteries and increase inflammation.
- Increase HEALTHY FATS: olive and other plant oils, almonds, walnuts, avocado, fish.
- Incorporate 20-30% of daily calories from healthy fats as part of a balanced eating plan.
- Fat provides energy for low-intensity exercise so a good source of fuel, in moderation of course 😉