



NEWS RELEASE

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Fat is fuel for your body

*By Lt. Col. Karen E. Hawkins, DeCA dietitian,
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FORT LEE, Va. – Fat in the diet has received a rather bad rap for a long time, yet it supplies energy and essential fatty acids that our bodies need. Fats are also used as building blocks for all the cells in the body. Although saturated and trans fats have been linked to conditions like heart disease, cancer and stroke, certain unsaturated fats can be healthful along with providing flavor in many dishes.

Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are praised for their ability to lower elevated low-density lipoprotein (“bad” cholesterol or LDL) levels but only the mono oils seem to also help keep high-density lipoprotein (“good” cholesterol or HDL) levels from dropping as well. All oils have about 120 calories and 14 grams of fat per tablespoon, with varying amounts of monounsaturated, polyunsaturated and saturated fats. The type of fat found the most of in oil helps determine which category an oil falls into, even though all oils contain all three types of fats.

Oils high in monounsaturated fats include hazelnut, olive, almond, mustard seed, canola and peanut. Oils high in polyunsaturated fats include sesame, corn, walnut, soy, grape seed and safflower. Avoiding coconut oil is often recommended because it's high in saturated fat.

When it comes to choosing oils, here are some ideas to help maximize health and taste:

- **Everyday use.** Use oil high in monounsaturated fats like olive or canola for routine use. Olive oil is flavorful and contains antioxidants. Canola oil is the lowest in saturated fat of all oils.
- **Cold dishes, dressings and marinades.** Use nut oils like almond, hazelnut and walnut that have a light, nutty flavor and do poorly when heated. Peanut oil is also flavorful but can tolerate heat well and is commonly used in sautés and dressings.
- **Burst of flavor.** Dark sesame, mustard seed or chile-flavored oils are best used in small amounts. They can also complement other oils.
- **Frying and sautéing.** All-purpose, neutral flavored oils are corn, soy, safflower, grape seed and canola. These are all good for frying due to their high smoke points but remember that fried foods absorb quite a bit of oil making them higher in calories.
- **Just a spray.** Use a nonstick pan and a misting of oil to minimize the amount of fat used while keeping the flavor.

For more information about making healthy choices, visit Ask the Dietitian on <http://www.commissaries.com> and post your questions on the DeCA Dietitian Forum. Be sure to look for other useful information in the Dietitian's Voice archive. Sign up with the DeCA Dietitian on www.twitter.com and get messages sent to your cell phone today. For delicious recipes, check out Kay's Kitchen. And to enjoy all your commissary has to offer, sign up for the *Commissary Connection*.

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— *Lt. Col. Burnett is an Air Force Reserve dietitian and a contributing writer to the Ask the Dietitian column.*

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial*

prices – savings worth about \$3,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.