**Fats, oils and spreads**

**Facts about fats, oils and spreads**

Fats and oils fit into the ‘extras’ group in our Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and should be consumed ‘sometimes or in small amounts’.\(^1\) Fats may be solid or liquid, and are found in a wide range of foods including butter, margarine, vegetable oils, meat, oily fish, nuts, avocado, biscuits, cakes, pastries, snack foods and take-away foods. The two main types of fats found in our foods are saturated and unsaturated fats. Saturated fat increases cholesterol levels in the blood, while some unsaturated fats may decrease cholesterol levels.

**How much fat do we need?**

Unsaturated fats are an essential part of dietary intake. In Australia, total fat intake is generally higher than required because it is found in a wide range of foods. It is important to aim for a moderate intake and

**Fats, oils and spreads in your school canteen**

Fats are an important part of our diet, however we only need a small amount of healthy fat to get the benefit that we require. Fat is high in energy, and can therefore contribute to excess weight gain. The choice of fats and oils is important as some increase blood cholesterol levels. Fat sources that are high in saturated fat are considered RED in the National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines and should be reduced and then avoided. Fats that are a good source of unsaturated fat – both monounsaturated and polyunsaturated – are considered AMBER. These unsaturated fats may lower blood cholesterol, but should still be consumed sparingly. Here is some colour-coding to help you categorise fat and oils in your canteen:

- Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated oils and spreads e.g. sunflower, safflower, corn, soya bean, olive, canola
- Other spreads including salsa, relishes
- Cream
- Coconut cream and coconut milk
- Butter
- Copha
- Gee
- Lard

It is important to choose from the AMBER list in your canteen, and to use sparingly. Although there are no GREEN fats and oils because of their high energy content, there are some alternative spreads that are GREEN such as low fat cream cheese and avocado. High fat foods including deep fried foods, doughnuts, cream-filled cakes, danishes, croissants and chocolate are RED foods.

**An update on training sessions for 2011 and 2012**

Healthy Food@School training sessions for 2011 are now booked out. More training sessions will be held in 2012, and the dates will be advertised in the next issue of *My Canteen*. We have thoroughly enjoyed the training sessions so far and meeting canteen managers, their assistants and other school representatives. It has been rewarding (and fun) to assist you to understand and navigate the guidelines. We are looking forward to the final two sessions of 2011 and the new sessions in 2012.

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Tips on fats, oils and spreads in your canteen

If you use fats, oils and spreads in your canteen, here are some tips for using the more healthy ones and less of the unhealthy ones. Also see attached recipes for cooking ideas.

- If you use butter as a spread, try margarine or use a low-fat cream cheese or avocado, or choose not to use a spread.
- Use polyunsaturated or monounsaturated oils in cooking rather than butter, lard or ghee.
- Replace the coconut cream and milk in coconut based curries with coconut flavoured evaporated milk.
- Swap cream based sources with light and creamy evaporated milk, or switch to a tomato based source.
- Use reduced fat dairy and lean meats to help moderate the fat content of foods sold.
- Try not to sell (or reduce the sale of) high fat RED snack foods such as crisps, chocolate, cream filled cakes and croissants.

Recipe ideas!

Creamy pasta (very tasty!)

Ingredients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serves</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>penne pasta</td>
<td>350g</td>
<td>700g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onion, diced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clove garlic, chopped</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lean leg ham, sliced</td>
<td>150g</td>
<td>300g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mushrooms, sliced</td>
<td>250g</td>
<td>500g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bunch English spinach, washed, drained, chopped</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capsicum, seeded and diced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>375ml evaporated milk</td>
<td>1 can</td>
<td>2 cans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cornflour</td>
<td>2 tsp</td>
<td>4 tsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parsley</td>
<td>2 tbsp</td>
<td>4 tbsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parmesan cheese</td>
<td>50g</td>
<td>100g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Method:
Cook pasta according to packet instructions and drain. Sauté onion and garlic in a non-stick pan with a little water until onion is soft. Add ham and mushrooms and cook until mushrooms are golden brown, adding a little water if necessary. Add spinach and capsicum, cooking until spinach is wilted. Add milk to the pan and heat through. In a small bowl, mix cornflour and a little water to a smooth paste and add to vegetable mixture. Combine vegetables, pasta, parsley and cheese and toss well.

Variation: For a vegetarian version, replace ham with extra mushrooms or tomato.

Food group serves: 2 serves vegies, 1 serve breads and cereals.
Serving suggestion: Serve in a small round plastic container with a plastic fork, or in a larger container with a side salad.
Cost: $4.56 approximately (per serve) for ingredients only.


Where to find out more information about fats, oils and spreads......

If you are interested in learning more about fats, oils and spreads, go to the National Heart Foundation website www.nationalheartfoundation.org. Click on the “healthy eating” icon and select “fats & cholesterol”. They have lots of extra information about sources of unsaturated and saturated fats and other food and nutrition facts. Of particular interest is the “butter versus margarine” icon. Click on this and read about why switching to margarine (if you use it in your canteen) will be a greener choice.

For more information please call or email Katie Birch at Nutrition Australia on 02 61622583 or act@nutritionaustralia.org and either Katie or Kristy Parsons will work with you and your canteen.