

# Staying off the SoFAS: Ways to Limit Solid Fats and Added Sugars

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## Introduction

All foods could make up part of a healthy diet. However, the typical American diet is too high in solid fats and added sugar. This leads to the consumption of 800 excess calories each day which could lead to a weight gain of six pounds in a month. Overweight and obesity increases a person's risk for chronic diseases.

## What are SoFAS?

SoFAS are calories from solid fats and added sugars. Solid fats are found in fatty animal-based foods, such as fatty meat, poultry skin, bacon, sausage, butter, and whole milk products. They are also found in foods made with vegetable oils, such as cookies, donuts, pastries, and crackers. These products are normally high in trans-fats and saturated fats. Solid fats should be replaced with polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats, such as, liquid vegetable oils (canola, olive, peanut, and soybean oils) and high-fat plant-based foods (nuts, seeds, olives, and avocados).

Added sugars are added to foods during processing, preparation, or are consumed separately.

Names for added sugars include: brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, maltose, malt syrup, molasses, raw sugar, turbinado sugar, trehalose, and sucrose. Reading the food label can let you know if a food product is high in added sugar. Added sugars do not include naturally occurring sugars such as those in fruit or milk.

## Limiting SoFAS

Foods high in solid fats and added sugars contribute more to weight gain than any other source of calories in the diet. SoFAS are high in calories but provide few essential nutrients. For most of us, SoFAS should be no more than 5 to 15 percent of calories in our diet, about 150 to 300 calories. To achieve this goal, we must limit snacks, fats, fatty meats, large amounts of grain-based desserts, and sugar-sweetened beverages.

It's important to understand the risks involved in over-consuming SoFAS. As a person's intake of solid fats from processed meats (hotdogs, sausage, and

bacon) increases, so does his or her risk of heart disease and colon and rectum cancers.

## Tips to limit SoFAS

- Choose foods prepared with little or no added sugars or solid fats.
- Eat fewer refined grains products such as cakes, cookies, other desserts, and pizza that are generally high in calories from solid fats and/or added sugars. When you have these products, have smaller portions.
- Drink few or no regular sodas, sports drinks, energy drinks, fruit drinks, and other sugar sweetened beverages. These drinks are the major sources of added sugars for Americans. Replace these drinks with water, fat-free milk, 100% fruit juice, or unsweetened tea or coffee.
- Save high-calorie desserts for special occasions, for example, the Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners, and choose smaller portion sizes when you have these desserts.
- Choose more nutrient-dense foods:
  - Fruits and vegetables
  - Whole grains like wheat bread, brown rice, rye, and whole-wheat pasta
  - Fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products
  - Seafood
  - Lean meats, poultry, and eggs
  - Beans, peas, nuts, and seeds

- Limit the amount of solid fats and added sugars when cooking or eating (e.g., trimming fat from meat, using less butter and stick margarine, and using less table sugar).
- Make recipes healthier:
  - Reduce sugar in recipes. The amount of sugar in recipes can often be reduced by twenty-five to thirty percent, without much change in flavor, resulting in significant calorie savings. Adding cinnamon and vanilla can give the impression of sweetness.
  - Use low-fat or fat-free milk and cheeses for holiday recipes.
  - Substitute a third to a half of the butter or oil with unsweetened applesauce.
  - Use oils to replace solid fats when possible.

## Resources

USDA 10 Tips Nutrition Series Add More Vegetables to your Day: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet2AddMoreVegetables.pdf>.

Focus on Fruits: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet3FocusOnFruits.pdf>.

Liven your Meals with Vegetables and Fruits: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet10LivenUpYourMeals.pdf>.

Make Half your Grains Whole Grains: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet4MakeHalfYourGrainsWhole.pdf>.

## References

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- United States Department of Agriculture. 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Accessed October 10, 2012, at: <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDoc/Policy-Doc.pdf>.

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