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The FitEngine 6-Week Nutritional Makeover – Week 4

You've spent the last three weeks working on transforming your diet into a nutrition-packed, well-balanced diet that supplies you with lots of vital nutrients and a steady supply of energy. The purpose of making this a 6-week transformation is to allow you make changes gradually, which is far less overwhelming than trying to take on a whole new lifestyle in one fell swoop. Each week, you're incorporating one or more healthy habits based on the latest nutritional research.

During the last three weeks, you've incorporated:

- Eating breakfast every day.
- Eating many small meals throughout the day.
- Taking supplements twice daily.
- Getting processed and junk foods out of your daily diet.
- Eating a wide variety of antioxidant-rich, deeply colored produce.

By now, you should be finding that you've lost excess fat and stored water, are feeling more energized throughout the day and are less moody and mentally sluggish. You should also be noticing that you're starting to prefer healthier foods.

This week, your focus is going to be on replacing unhealthy fats in your diet with much healthier ones. This is not only essential to a healthy heart and arteries, but it can help you avoid Type 2 diabetes, improve your overall cholesterol levels and also help you to lose more weight.



Image courtesy of Pawel231/SCX

This Week's Step: Ditch the bad fats and eat the good ones.

There are several types of dietary fats and sorting them out can seem complicated. We're going to simplify that process for you and show you which fats you need to get rid of, which ones you need to get more of and which foods contain them.

Let's start with the different types of dietary fats, which we like to call the good, the bad and the ugly.

The Good: Mono- and Polyunsaturated fats

Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats lower your bad (LDL) cholesterol and raise your good (HDL) cholesterol levels, which improves your heart and artery health and can help you avoid not only heart disease, but Type 2 diabetes and stroke.

Monounsaturated fats are found in olive oil, olives, peanut oil, canola oil, avocados, poultry, nuts and seeds.

Polyunsaturated fats are found in vegetable oils such as safflower, corn, sunflower, soy and cottonseed oils, nut oils (such as peanut oil), poultry, nuts and seeds.

Omega-3 fatty acids are a type of polyunsaturated fat and one of the healthiest fats you can eat. This is why we had you start taking an Omega-3 supplement during Week 1. However, your body is better able to process and use Omega-3 fats that you eat, as opposed to the ones you just swallow. You can get plenty of Omega-3 fats by eating fatty, cold-water fish such as salmon, mackerel and herring, ground flaxseed, flax oil and walnuts.

The Bad:

Saturated fat is found mostly in animal products such as meat and dairy and in a few oils. It isn't a complete no-no, but it does need to be limited to no more than 10g per day. We promised you no measuring and no counting, so there's no need to whip out your calculator every time you take in a little saturated fat. Just watch your portions and servings of animal products such as beef, pork, lamb, milk, butter and cheese. Forget about oils such as palm oil or coconut oil, you have better choices (canola and olive oils) and should save your saturated fat intake for stuff that tastes good, like cheese or steak.

The Ugly:

These would be the trans-fats we mentioned when we told you why you needed to cut out the processed foods. Also known as hydrogenated oils, trans-fats are no better for you than floor wax and are credited with a good deal of the heart disease, obesity and Type 2 diabetes that have reached epidemic proportions here in the US. Trans-fats are found in packaged cookies, cakes and snacks and in most fried foods, especially those from the fast food restaurants. They're also the fat found in margarine.

Your task this week is to cut out the trans-fats, which should be fairly easy if you've stopped eating processed and fried foods and limit your saturated fat. Then you need to eat more of the mono and polyunsaturated fats. Use olive and canola oils for cooking and preparing dressings. Olive oil is great with a bit of salt and pepper in place of butter. Eat shellfish, cold-water fish and lean poultry instead of steak, ground beef, pork or lamb. Save those meats for occasional meals. Snack on olives, avocados and black walnuts.

Getting rid of the bad fats and eating more of the good ones will not only improve your overall health but also help you to lose weight and maintain your ideal weight once you reach it. You'll also see improvements in your skin tone and digestion. Not only that, but your increased intake of Omega-3 fats can:

- Ease symptoms of ADD and depression.
- Help you to concentrate and focus on tasks.
- Stabilize your moods.
- Ward off Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

Make these changes one day or one meal at a time, gradually easing the less-healthy foods out of your diet and the healthier ones in. On Monday, exchange your roast beef for roast turkey. On Tuesday, start eating walnuts throughout the day. You get the picture.

See you next week!

