



During a recent nutrition workshop, Marlene Nash, multi-extension agent, explains how scientists determine the amount of fat grams in food.

## Nutrition Workshop Separates Facts From Fiction

**LOU ANN GOOD**  
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WEST CHESTER (Chester Co.) — What's a person to believe?

Magazines, newspapers, and television constantly sprout out the results of new nutritional studies. While some research remains consistent, much appears to flip-flop or sound outrageously conflicting.

To help sort out truth from sensationalism, Marlene Nash, R.D., multi-extension agent, held a nutritional workshop at the Chester County extension office recently.

In easy-to-understand language, Nash explained scientifically how human bodies use nutrients and how studies can come to different conclusions when not conducted properly.

Nash said, "Most health professionals agree that if you reduce the amount of cholesterol and total fat in your diet, you can increase your chances of living a healthier life."

Lowering fat lowers your risk of heart disease and certain cancers.

Scientists have identified three different types of fats:

- Monounsaturated fat is liquid at room temperature and is considered to have heart protection. Sources include olive, canola, peanut, and avocado oils.

- Polyunsaturated fat tends to be liquid at room temperature. These include safflower, sunflower, corn, sesame seed, soybean, and cottonseed oils, and most margarines. However hydrogenating (adding hydrogen to) unsaturated oils makes them more solid at room temperature and behave more like saturated fat. When buying tub or stick margarines, the first ingredient should read liquid soybean or corn oil and not hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils.

- Saturated fat comes from animal sources and is found in dairy products and meats. In addition, palm and coconut oil also have saturated fat. Saturated fat and cholesterol are not the same thing, but foods rich in saturated fat are usually high in cholesterol as well. Cholesterol is present only in animal products. Recommended consumption is 300 mg daily.

Cholesterol is a wax-like substance that is present and produced

in body cells. It is found only in foods of animal origin such as meats, dairy products, and eggs.

These foods also contain valuable nutrients and need not be eliminated to meet the daily recommended amount of 300 milligrams of cholesterol daily.

Select low-fat dairy foods. Replace whole eggs with egg whites and eat smaller and leaner portions of meat.

Most American women's body weights are 30 percent fat, but the recommended body fat should be 20 percent. Nash cautioned participants to steer clear of fad diets, which often allow people to experience temporary weight loss at a nutritional loss.

To eat properly and to lose weight safely, it is important to understand the role proteins, carbohydrates, and fats play in the body.

Proteins, carbohydrates, and fats provide calories for energy, but fat has more than twice the amount of calories as a gram of carbohydrates or protein. For carbohydrates and protein, one gram equals four calories, but one gram of fat equals nine calories.

Nash explained how scientists determine calories by igniting food to find out how high the temperature rises and how long it burns. When measuring intake, 1,000 mg equals 1 gram.

Fats are stored and work as a body pantry.

Nash said, "It's a survival mechanism."

However, one doesn't need to eat fat to have fat stored. If more protein or carbohydrates than the body can use is consumed, the body turns the excess protein and carbohydrates into fat.

The body stores about 16 hours worth of carbohydrates in the liver. Although protein is the lowest choice for the body to burn calories, the body will break down protein and use it if food isn't consumed for 16 hours. But for long-term non-eating, the body begins to burn fat and protein together.

Nutritionists recommend that adults get 30 percent of calories from fat, but they can reduce that amount without problems. However, children under two should never have eat a diet that is less than 30 percent fat, since a high

percentage of fat is needed for proper brain cell development.

Most carbohydrates are a great source of energy and low in fat. There are two different kinds of carbohydrates:

- Complex carbohydrates come from starches, cereals, vegetables, etc.

- Simple carbohydrates include sugars. Ingredients that end with "ose" such as lactose and fructose are sugars.

Complex carbohydrates take the body longer to digest and absorb.

Sodium is an essential nutrient. Daily recommended amount is 3,000-4,000 mg which is equal to 3 to 4 grams, but the body needs only 175 mg. Most Americans consume 10,000 mg of salt. One teaspoon of salt equals 2,000 mg. Table salt can be completely eliminated and a sufficient amount is found naturally in food. Canned and prepared foods often contain high dosages of sodium.

Nash said that 42 essential nutrients are needed daily. Minerals, vitamins, and water are needed to help the body grow and remain healthy. Water soluble vitamins are needed daily because they are used in water and excreted rather than stored. Fat soluble vitamins are not needed every day.

It is best to get vitamins and minerals from food rather than from supplements, but many people do not eat a balanced diet every day. To determine if you should take daily vitamins, assess what you are eating or ask your doctor. You may need only a calcium supplement rather than a multi-vitamin.

For literature or more information on nutrition or weight control, contact your county extension office or Penn State Cooperative Extension Chester County, Government Services Center, 601 Westtown Rd. Suite 370, West Chester, PA 19382-4546.

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