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The **LOW FAT** Diet

Reduction of dietary fat is often helpful in the treatment of several gastrointestinal disorders. Patients with **gastroesophageal reflux** suffer from stomach contents (including acid) flowing upward into the esophagus, causing heartburn and **reflux esophagitis**. Fatty foods promote this reflux, and a reduction of dietary fat is important in relieving the symptoms of reflux.

Fat slows stomach emptying. Reducing dietary fat may minimize symptoms of nausea, feeling full after eating only small amounts, and vomiting. This may be especially helpful in patients who already have **delayed gastric emptying** on the basis of diabetes mellitus or surgical removal of a portion of their stomach.

Patients with **chronic pancreatitis**, **Crohn's disease** or **small intestinal resection** (surgical removal of portions of the small intestine) may have impaired digestion and absorption of dietary fat. Dietary fat reduction will reduce diarrhea in such cases. In addition, where pancreatitis has been caused by elevated levels of blood **triglycerides**, reduction of dietary fat and lowering of blood triglyceride levels (often along with medication) is effective in preventing further attacks of pancreatitis.

Although reducing dietary fat will not cure diseases of the gallbladder or cause **gallstones** to dissolve, it is often effective in minimizing the occurrence of meal-related pain in patients with gallstones.

A "good fat" diet is now recommended for a healthy lifestyle rather than a low fat diet. While diets high in saturated fat increase blood cholesterol and increase the risk of heart disease, diets high in monounsaturated fats actually lower blood cholesterol and improve cardiac health. Cholesterol in food does not strongly influence blood cholesterol levels. Foods containing trans fats are worse for cholesterol levels than saturated fats and should be avoided. See our dietary handout entitled "**Good Fat, Bad Fat**" for additional details.

GUIDELINES TO FOOD SELECTIONS

Low-Fat Foods

Dairy: skim, ½%, 1% milk; buttermilk made from skim milk; non-fat dry milk; yogurt made from skim milk; non-fat frozen desserts, cheeses made from skim milk

Breads: whole grain bread, white bread, plain crackers, bagels, graham crackers, melba toast

Cereals: dry and cooked cereals without nuts or coconut

Vegetables and Fruits: all

Meats: baked, broiled, roasted, stewed lean beef, pork, lamb, liver, veal, skinless poultry, fish, shellfish, canned tuna packed in water

Eggs: limit one whole egg or egg yolk daily; no limit on egg whites

Fats: limit 3 tsp. daily of the following combined: butter, margarine, oil, shortening, salad dressing and mayonaise

Foods to Avoid

Dairy: milk (whole, 2%), chocolate milk, processed cheese and spreads, cream, ice cream, ice milk, sour cream, custards, cream pies, cakes, sherbet, cream or chocolate candy

Breads: French toast, pancakes, biscuits, muffins, cornbread, doughnuts

Meats: hotdogs, sausage, duck, tuna, ribs, lunch meats

Other: gravies and sauces, anything fried, olives, avocado, alcohol, creamed soups, chocolate, most desserts