



# FACTS on FAT

Queensland  
Government  
Queensland Health

## Fact

Australians on average eat 580 grams of fat every week and 230 grams of that fat is saturated – that’s half a pound of butter plus half a tub of margarine each week!

## Why the fuss about fat?

Most Australians think they have a healthy eating pattern, but on average we eat too much fat, particularly saturated fat. This can also mean too many kilojoules (calories). Eating too much fat, particularly saturated fat, increases your risk of developing heart disease, some forms of cancer, diabetes, and overweight and obesity.

You may not think you eat too much fat, or too much saturated fat. This is because much of it is ‘hidden’ in meals we prepare or buy, and in foods like cakes, pastries, biscuits, chips and sauces. Because you can’t see it, you don’t know how much fat you are eating, or what type of fat it is.

## Not all fats are the same

You’ve probably heard all sorts of names for fat, such as vegetable fat, animal fat, saturated fat and cholesterol. All of these different names are very confusing for most people, so let’s take a moment to consider the different types of fat.

Most of the fat in the food we eat is a mixture of three main types: saturated, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated. There are also some other types of fat that you may have heard of such as omega 3, omega 6, trans fats, sterols and stanols, and cholesterol.

**Saturated fat** is mainly found in animal foods such as fatty meats and dairy foods such as milk, cheese and butter. It is also found in some plant foods, including coconut and palm oil. Saturated fats are usually solid at room temperature and are commonly used in commercially produced foods such as biscuits, pastries, deep fried takeaways, potato crisps and confectionery. Saturated fat is the type of fat that raises blood cholesterol and increases risk of heart disease.

**Polyunsaturated fat** is mostly found in plant foods including sunflower, safflower, and soybean oils, nuts and seeds. However it is also the type of fat found in oily fish such as salmon, tuna and sardines. Polyunsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature, and can help lower blood cholesterol and reduce risk of heart disease.

**Omega-3** and **Omega-6** fats are types of polyunsaturated fats. Omega-3 fats are mainly found in fish and omega-6 fats are mainly found in vegetable oils.

**Monounsaturated fat** is found in oils such as canola and olive, and other plant foods including avocados, nuts and seeds. It is also found in lean meats, and is generally a liquid at room temperature, but may solidify in cold temperatures. Monounsaturated fat can also help lower blood cholesterol and reduce risk of heart disease.

**Trans fat** is fat that is produced during manufacturing when liquid oils are converted to hard oils, eg. in the production of margarine. These fats can have the same effect on our blood cholesterol as saturated fat.

**Cholesterol** is *only* found in animal foods. It is not in plants. Cholesterol is a fatty substance that is an important part of all animals, including us! Our bodies produce it naturally, even if we don't eat it. Cholesterol is a problem when there is too much in our blood. Eating too much saturated fat can cause high blood cholesterol.

**Sterols and stanols** are a plant form of cholesterol found in fruit, vegetables, nuts, seeds and whole grains. When eaten, they prevent our bodies from absorbing the cholesterol we eat. Recent advances in manufacturing have enabled them to be added in larger amounts to foods such as margarine, but they are present in small amounts in most plant foods.

## Fat: A matter of balance

Eating less fat and eating the right type of fat doesn't mean giving up all the foods you enjoy. Really, it's just a matter of balance. Small changes to the way you prepare and cook foods, looking at food labels before you buy, and thinking about the sort of takeaways and meals you eat out can make a big difference.

This booklet provides you with practical tips to eat less fat, particularly saturated fat. Remember, some types of fats are actually good for your health and should be eaten in small amounts.

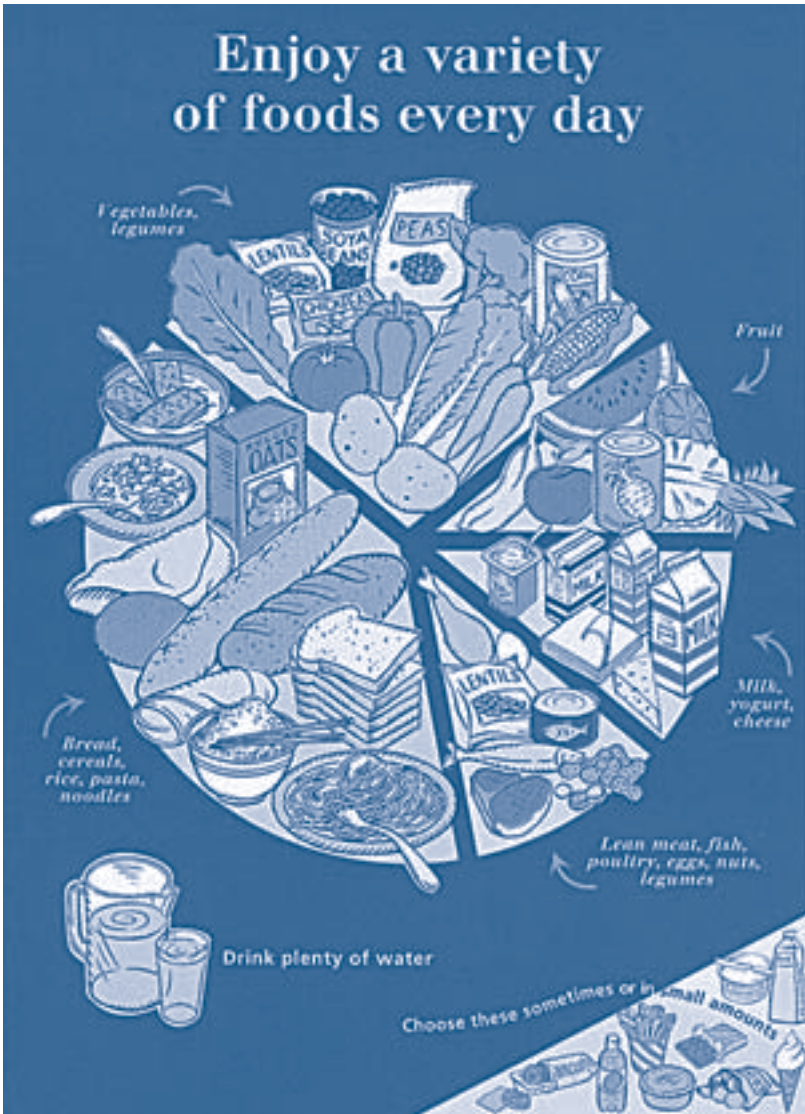
## Getting the balance right

*The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* is one guide to balanced eating. For healthy eating, try to:

- 1 Choose foods from each of the five food groups every day
- 2 Eat
  - plenty of plant foods (bread, cereal, rice, pasta, noodles, vegetables, legumes and fruit)
  - moderate amounts of animal foods or alternatives (milk, yoghurt, cheese, meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, legumes)
  - small amounts of extra foods including oils and margarines.

- 3 For variety, choose different foods from within each of the five food groups from day to day, week to week and at different times of the year.
- 4 Drink plenty of water.

## The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating



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### Did you know?

Most of the fat we eat comes from dairy products (eg, ice cream), fat added to potatoes (eg. chips, mashed potato), pastries, biscuits and cakes, and meat. The fat in all of these foods is often hidden and is mostly saturated fat.

## Getting started – finding the fat and deciding the type

### A quick check

Here are some examples of where the fat, particularly the saturated fat, in what you eat may come from. Circle the answer that applies to you or your family's eating plan.

#### How often do you eat pies, pastries, biscuits or cakes?

Daily or almost daily	3
Several times a week	2
About once a week	1
Less than once a week	0

#### How often do you eat potato crisps, chocolates, and other snack foods?

Daily or almost daily	3
Several times a week	2
About once a week	1
Less than once a week	0

#### How often do you eat deep fried chicken, chips, fried rice, or pizza?

Daily or almost daily	3
Several times a week	2
About once a week	1
Less than once a week	0

#### If you eat meat, and/or poultry, how much fat/skin on the meat do you eat?

All	3
Some	2
Very little	1
None	0

#### How often do you add butter, cream, sour cream, coconut milk or creamy sauces to vegetables, pasta, rice or casseroles?

Daily or almost daily	3
Several times a week	2
About once a week	1
Less than once a week	0

**If you scored a 2 or 3 for any question, these are good places for you to start cutting down on the fat, especially saturated fat in your meals.**

## Hidden Fats

The obvious or 'visible' fat, such as that on the edge of meat, what you spread on your bread, or garnishes such as cream and sour cream are easy to locate. The fat 'hidden' in food however, is just as important for how much and what type of fat we eat. It is also harder to find or to know about. The guide below should give you an idea of how much fat is in some of the foods we eat. Most of these foods are high in saturated fat.

<b>Food</b>	<b>Teaspoons of fat</b>
Lamb chops, untrimmed – 2 chops (145g)	11 ½
Lamb chops, trimmed – 2 chops (145g)	3
Roast chicken without skin – 2 slices (60g)	½
BBQ steak, untrimmed – 1 steak (120g)	3 ¼
Sausage – thin, grilled – 2 (100g)	5 ½
Fish, crumbed, deep fried – 1 piece (120g)	4 ½
Fish, plain, grilled – 1 piece (120g)	¾
Luncheon Meat – 2 slices (60g)	3 ¾
Salami – 2 slices (60g)	5 ½
Sausage roll – 1 (130g)	5 ¾
Hot chips, 1 carton (150g)	5 ½
Jacket potato, 1 large (150g)	0
Potato chips – 1 serve (200g)	7 ½
Fast food hamburger – 1 (205g)	7 ½
Hamburger – 1 (170g)	4 ¼
Chicken Nuggets – 6 (114g)	5
Bread, 2 slices with thick spread of butter or margarine	6
Bread, 2 slices with thin spread of butter or margarine	2
Lamington – 1 (60g)	1 ¾
Plain doughnut – 1 (60g)	3

Potato crisps – 75g packet	6
Cream filled biscuits – 2 (30g)	1 3/4
Plain sweet biscuits – 2 (20g)	1
Full cream milk – 1 cup (250g)	2 1/2
Skim milk – 1 cup (250g)	1/2
Plain milk chocolate – 1 bar (55g)	4 1/4
Ice cream – 2 scoops (120g)	3
Croissant – 1 (63g)	3 1/2

## What next?

Once you've found the fat, particularly the saturated fat, in what you eat, you can begin to make some small changes. The changes you make need to be those that can easily fit into your lifestyle. That is, changes you can make for the rest of your life.

## Tips for eating less fat, especially saturated fat

Here are some tips for cutting down on fat, particularly saturated fat. Tick those you do now and put a mark against those you think you could do.

### Shopping

#### Vegetables and fruit

- Fill your shopping trolley with plenty of these. Try some of the new varieties of fruits and vegetables (eg. Asian vegetables, tropical fruits) that are now more readily available. Don't just stick to the same ones every day.



#### Breads and cereals

- Try to include wholegrain and wholemeal breads and cereals rather than more processed breads/cereals. Limit the amount of breads you have with extra cheese, bacon or other high saturated fat toppings.



- ❑ Include a variety of other grain foods such as pasta, rice, noodles and cous cous. If you use pre-prepared sauces, make sure they are vegetable based rather than cream based.

### Meats

- ❑ Choose lean cuts of meat without marbling (fat through the meat) – topside, blade, rump, fillet, gravy beef, veal steaks, pork fillet, ‘new fashioned’ pork, and ‘trim’ lamb.
- ❑ Choose lean mince (the redder the mince the leaner it is) or ask your butcher to mince a piece of lean beef for you.



### Dairy Foods

- ❑ Buy reduced fat or skim milk. Reduced fat milk has half the fat of full cream milk; skim milk has virtually no fat. Don’t just try it once – give your taste buds a few days to adjust to the new taste.
- ❑ Try some of the low fat fruit yoghurts. You won’t be able to tell the difference!
- ❑ Choose the reduced fat cheese varieties (which have 25% or less fat than regular cheese) or the low fat soft cheeses such as ricotta or cottage cheese. These can be great in cooking, eg. ricotta cheese combined with an egg or cornflour is a great substitute for cheese sauce in lasagne.



### Margarines and oils

- ❑ The best choices are unsaturated – polyunsaturated and monounsaturated. Choose sunflower, safflower, olive, canola, peanut, sesame and soybean based oils and margarines.



## Preparation and Cooking

### Vegetables and fruit

- ❑ To roast vegetables, brush them with oil such as sunflower, canola or olive and bake on a rack.
- ❑ Make delicious salad dressings with lemon or orange juice, vinegar, garlic and herbs. Add a small amount of olive, sunflower or canola oil. For creamy dressings use low fat yoghurt.

- ❑ If you add butter to vegetables (eg. mashed potato) use a little margarine and low fat milk instead. Experiment with different herbs and spices as well.



### **Breads and cereals**

- ❑ Use margarine instead of butter on bread. Alternatively try other types of spreads such as avocado, mayonnaise, hummus, paté, chutney or pickles.
- ❑ Use vegetable and tomato based sauces rather than cream based sauces for pasta and rice.

### **Meats**

- ❑ Trim all the visible fat from meat before cooking, whether for roasts, steaks or casseroles. Remove skin and fat from chicken before cooking, or at least before eating.
- ❑ Baste meats with tomato juice, stock, wine, or marinate overnight to add extra flavour. Baste skinless chicken and fish before and during cooking to prevent it drying out.
- ❑ When roasting meat, trim away the fat and season with herbs and spices of your choice. Cook on a rack and baste with a little oil as necessary during cooking.
- ❑ If you use the meat pan juices to make gravy, pour the fat off first.
- ❑ If you make your own stock or soup from meat bones, refrigerate overnight after cooking, then scrape off the layer of fat before heating or using in other dishes.
- ❑ Grill sausages, steak and chops on a grill that allows the fat to drain away.
- ❑ Use fatty meats and smallgoods (like salami and devon) rarely.



### **Dairy foods**

- ❑ Use low fat or reduced fat dairy products (milk, cheese and yoghurt) instead of full cream products.
- ❑ In place of cream try whipped evaporated skim milk or ricotta cheese. Try replacing sour cream with plain low fat yoghurt.
- ❑ Make tasty dips with low fat yoghurt and cottage or ricotta cheese. Use a variety of seasonings such as tomato paste, garlic and herbs for flavouring. Serve with raw vegetable pieces as well as pita bread or water cracker biscuits.



- ❑ Try low fat milk or evaporated milk instead of full cream milk or cream, when making sauces, soups and custards. Skim milk powder made to double strength has a creamy texture without extra saturated fat.

### Added fats

- ❑ When using pastry, line either the top or bottom of the dish rather than both, or use filo pastry and brush every second sheet with oil or margarine rather than butter.
- ❑ Use margarine or oil (such as sunflower, safflower, olive, canola) instead of butter, dripping or lard when you cook meat, fish, chicken and vegetables. Try to grill, steam, stir-fry, boil, BBQ, microwave, or oven bake foods rather than deep fry or roast.
- ❑ Sauté, brown or stir-fry food with a little oil in a non-stick pan. If food starts to stick, add a little water, wine or stock.
- ❑ Boil or poach eggs, or fry in a non-stick pan brushed with oil.



### Snacks and takeaways

- ❑ Always ask for extra salad with your sandwiches, rolls, kebabs, and hamburgers, and if you want extra meat, cheese, or egg, have one, not all!
- ❑ Choose steamed rice instead of fried rice with your Asian meal, and order braised, chow mien, and stir-fried meat and vegetable dishes rather than battered meat or deep fried dishes.
- ❑ Go for tomato based rather than creamy sauces for pasta, rice, vegetables and meat.
- ❑ Always ask for reduced fat or skim milk to be used in milkshakes and coffees.
- ❑ Add some fruit to your takeaway meal whenever you can.
- ❑ Limit the amount of deep fried and snack foods you eat, such as chips, fried chicken, pies, sausage rolls, chocolate, doughnuts and pastries.



### Did you know?

You add nearly four times the kilojoules and 5½ teaspoons of fat by turning the humble potato into a bucket of chips!

## Just how much fat and saturated fat is in foods?

These pictures show how much fat is in different forms of the same foods. Each little yellow cube represents a teaspoon of fat. All of the fat, except the margarine on bread, is saturated fat.





## Did you know?

Butter and margarine have the same amount of fat and kilojoules. The difference between them is the type of fat they contain.

## Adapting recipes

Reducing the amount of fat, particularly saturated fat you eat, doesn't mean avoiding your favourite recipes. Many of them can be adapted so they are lower in fat and saturated fat, but still rate high on the taste stakes. Using less of some ingredients, substituting others, and using slightly different methods of cooking may be all that is needed.

You may already have some ideas on how you can adapt your recipes from the tips given in this brochure. Here are a couple of favourite recipes to show you how you can modify them to be lower in fat, particularly saturated fat.

### Chicken Coconut Curry (Serves 4 – 6 people)

Adapted recipe serves 6-8

1 chicken cut into pieces *• Remove skin and fat*

1 tablespoon oil

1 can coconut cream *• Replace with 2 tablespoons coconut milk powder mixed with ½ cup water; and 1 can light evaporated milk*

2 teaspoons curry powder

2 onions *• Add a chopped clove of garlic as well*

4 potatoes *• Add more vegetables, such as 2 sweet potatoes, 3 carrots, and 3 zucchinis*

Rice

1. Heat oil in a pan, and fry onions and chicken pieces for a few minutes. *• Garlic*

2. Add coconut cream, curry powder and chopped potatoes. *• Replace with coconut milk powder and water mix*

*• And other vegetables except green vegetables*

3. Cook on low for about 1 hour. *• Add some water if mixture starts to get dry*

4. Serve with boiled rice.

*• Add the green vegetables and stir in the evaporated milk about 15 minutes before serving*

## Apple Pie

Serves 6

500g rich shortcrust pastry

7 large Granny Smith apples, peeled and sliced

¼ cup water

3 tbsps sugar

3 tbsps sultanas

2 tspns grated lemon rind

¼ tspn cinnamon

1 egg white, lightly beaten

1. Roll out half the pastry to line a 23cm (9in) pie plate.

2. To make filling, place apple slices in a large saucepan with water. Bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for 3 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in sugar, sultanas, lemon rind and cinnamon.

3. Spoon filling into pastry case. Brush edges of pastry and cover filling with remaining pastry. Make a decorative pattern around the edge.

4. Brush top with egg white and sprinkle with sugar. Bake at 200°C (450°F) until golden.

Options:

- Try low-fat pastry recipe below
- Use filo pastry and make a lid only
- Make a strudel, using 6 sheets of filo pastry, brushing only every second sheet with a little margarine
- Reduce to 1½ tablespoons

• If making a strudel, place apple down one edge of pastry sheet and roll up

Low-fat pastry

Sift 2 cups of self-raising flour, returning husks to the bowl.

Add 250g ricotta cheese and mix with a fork.

Moisten the mixture with 4 tablespoons of low fat milk and knead into a ball.

## A word on food labels

Many people may be confused by the information on food labels. Since December 2002 all foods now include a nutrition information panel that gives the amount of energy (kilojoules or calories), protein, total fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, sugars and sodium in the food. These amounts must be stated per 100g and per serve size of the food. When comparing products, always use the per 100g column.

A food label must also list the ingredients in the food in order of weight. Thus, the ingredient listed first is the main ingredient in the food, followed by the next ingredient and so on down the list. Water must also be included in the appropriate place in the ingredient list, instead of at the end as 'water added'.

The nutrition information panel and ingredient list are useful ways of determining the amount and type of fat in a food. For example, a packet of cracker biscuits might show the following information:

Ingredients: whole wheat flour, glucose, malt extract, sugar, vegetable fats and oils, mineral salts (500, 503, 341) yeast, salt.		
Servings per package – approximately 5		
Serving size - 43g (6 biscuits)		
	Per serving	per 100g
Energy	663kJ (158 Cal)	1542kJ (367 Cal)
Protein	5.0g	11.9g
Fat – total	1.2g	2.8g
– saturated	0.25g	0.57g
Carbohydrate – total	32g	72.7g
– sugars	1.4g	3.3g
Sodium	141mg	329mg

While the fat listed in the ingredient list of this example is not specific, the nutrition panel shows the product is low in fat and low in saturated fat. **As a general rule, if a product has less than 10g per 100g of total fat, and less than 3g per 100g of saturated fat it is a good choice.**

It is important to know that even if a food has less than 10g per 100g of fat, it can still provide a large amount of fat when consumed in regular amounts. For example, full cream milk has 4g of fat per 100g, but 100g of milk is less than half a glass. If you drink a whole glass of full cream milk you will drink about 10g of fat. Two glasses have about 20g fat (1 tablespoon) and so on. It doesn't take long to add up. So it is important that you think about how much of a food you eat (or serve size), as well as the amount of fat per 100g.

When you are trying to find the amount and type of fat in a food, it is also useful to know some of the different ingredients that are high in fat or saturated fat. Fat, or saturated fat can also be listed as...

Vegetable oil/fat	Palm Oil	Animal fat/oil	Coconut Oil	Copha
Butter fat	Shortening	Milk solids/fats	Lard	Chocolate

Other terms found on labels that can cause confusion include:

*'Light' or 'Lite'* can mean a number of things, but not necessarily low in fat or saturated fat. The product could be light in flavour, salt, weight, colour, alcohol, fat or kilojoules.

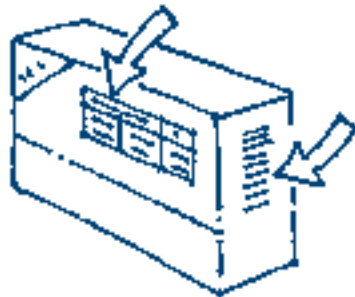
*'No Cholesterol' or 'Cholesterol Free'* does not mean no fat. Many foods can be free of cholesterol but not of saturated fat, eg. palm oil and coconut oil. Remember, plant foods do not contain cholesterol.

*'90% Fat Free'* really means the product has 10g fat per 100g. Think about the amount of the food you are likely to eat before judging how much fat or saturated fat the product will give you. If the product weighs 300g and you will eat it all at one sitting, then it is not really a low fat food.

If you are watching your weight, it also important to look at how much sugar and how many calories are in a food. Many "fat free" foods have extra sugar and are just as high in calories as the original product.

Other information on a food label includes:

- the name of the food
- the name and business address of the manufacturer or importer
- the country of origin of the food
- a 'use-by' or 'best before' date
- net weight.



## Good food – in a hurry

Try some of these quick recipes. They're low in fat, especially saturated fat, but taste great!

### MINI PIZZAS

2 bread roll/ muffin halves, or 2 small pita bread  
2 tbsps tomato paste  
Pinch oregano  
3 tbsps *reduced fat* cheese  
or *mozzarella* cheese

Your choice of toppings such as:

1 slice of ham, chopped  
Tomato, chopped  
½ onion, chopped  
Diced pineapple rings



1. Toast one side of the base of your choice.
2. On the untoasted side, spread with tomato paste, and add toppings.  
Sprinkle with oregano and grated cheese. Place under grill until cheese is melted and golden.
3. Enjoy as a snack, or serve with a tossed salad.

### SPAGHETTI BOLOGNAISE

(serves 4)

1 packet (375g) spaghetti, cooked  
400g lean mince  
1 clove of garlic, crushed  
1 onion, finely chopped  
2 sticks of celery, chopped  
1 carrot, grated  
425g can tomatoes  
½ cup beef stock or red wine  
1 tspn parsley or mixed herbs  
Pepper to taste



1. In a frypan brown mince thoroughly *using a little oil*. Add garlic, onion, celery and carrot and cook for a few minutes.
2. Stir in tomatoes stock or wine, parsley or mixed herbs and pepper. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes.
3. Serve with pasta, a *little* parmesan cheese and side salad.

## STIR-FRY CHICKEN AND VEGETABLES

(serves 4)

400 g fresh or cooked chicken  
2 tspns oil  
1 onion, sliced in eights  
1 clove of garlic, finely chopped  
1 tspn fresh, or ¼ tspn dried ginger  
4-5 cups vegetables, chopped or sliced  
(e.g. broccoli, cauliflower, carrot, capsicum,  
celery, green beans and bean sprouts)  
½ cup chicken stock  
1 tbspn cornflour  
2 tbsps sherry or water  
1 tbspn soy sauce  
Ground black pepper



1. Remove skin from fresh chicken and cut into strips (if using pre-cooked chicken, cut into strips and put aside).
2. Brush pan with oil and heat. Add oil, garlic, and ginger. Saute lightly.
3. If using uncooked chicken, add to pan and stir-fry until cooked. Set aside. Add hard vegetables to pan (broccoli, carrots, celery) and cook for two minutes. Add remaining vegetables and stock and cook for a further 3 minutes.
4. Blend cornflour, sherry or water, soy sauce and pepper. Add to the pan with the chicken. Cook for a further minute. Service with rice or noodles.

## CARROT AND SULTANA LOAF

Makes 1 loaf (about 12 slices)

1 cup of grated carrot  
1 cup of sultanas  
1 cup of processed bran cereal  
½ cup brown sugar, firmly packed  
1 ½ cups reduced fat milk  
1 ½ cups of wholemeal self-raising flour  
1 tspn cinnamon



1. Combine carrot, sultanas, bran cereal, sugar and milk in a bowl.
2. Add sifted flour and cinnamon, returning husks to the bowl. Mix well.
3. Pour into a lightly greased loaf tin.
4. Bake at 180 C for 50 – 55 minutes. Cool before removing from tin. *Serve with a little margarine.*

Variation: In place of carrot, try dried apricots (soak in the milk for 2 hours before using). Any dried fruit can be used in place of sultanas (e.g. raisins, dates).

## Making changes

We've given you plenty of ideas to reduce the amount of fat, particularly saturated fat you eat. Now it is time to try some of them.

Read through the tips on page 6 to 9 and look at the ones you've placed a mark next to. Start with one or more of these. You can add others at a pace that suits you. Set small goals so you can stick to them.

Remember the changes you make should be those that you feel you can live with for life. In fact, a number of small changes all add up and can make quite a difference!

## Some recommended nutrition and recipe books

(Available from selected bookstores, newsagents or organisations where indicated)

### **Nutrition for Life**

Catherine Saxelby, Hardy Grant Books

### **Busy Body Cookbook**

Catherine Saxelby, Hodder and Stoughton

### **Healthy Cooking**

Rosemary Stanton, Murdoch Books

### **The Diet Dilemma**

Rosemary Stanton, Allen and Unwin

### **Gutbuster Waist Loss Guide**

Rosemary Stanton and Garry Egger

### **Weight for a Change**

Maria Clemens, Nutrition Australia [www.nutritionaustralia.org](http://www.nutritionaustralia.org)

### **Healthy Food for Families**

Nutrition Australia

### **Food Secrets**

George Fisher and Judy Walker, Nutrition Australia

### **Cooking for Few**

National Heart Foundation of Australia [www.heartfoundation.com.au](http://www.heartfoundation.com.au)

### **Healthy Eating for the Heart**

National Heart Foundation of Australia

### **Deliciously Healthy**

National Heart Foundation of Australia

### **Dietary Guidelines for Older Australians.**

### **Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults.**

### **Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents.**

National Medical Health and Research Council [www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/](http://www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/)