

What Does it all Mean? *-A Nutritional Glossary*

Antioxidant- Substances such as vitamin E, vitamin C or selenium that prevents the oxidation of another substance by taking up the oxygen itself. It stabilizes the free radicals. In this way, it stops the chain reaction that can cause damage.

Carbohydrates- Key human energy source. Examples include fruit, cereals, breads, grains, potatoes, and legumes.

Cholesterol- A fat-like substance produced by the liver and obtained from the diet in animal foods. Blood cholesterol is effected by many factors including diet.

Complex Carbohydrate- Carbohydrate made up of many simple carbohydrates, such as starch and cellulose: found in cereals, potatoes, and legumes.

HDL- High Density Lipoproteins. This type of cholesterol helps to remove cholesterol from body tissues and blood and return it to the liver to be used again. This recycling process has earned it the reputation of “*GOOD*” cholesterol.

Hydrogenated Fats and Oils- A laboratory process called hydrogenation is used to alter the chemical structure of unsaturated fats, making them saturated, shelf stable, yet will raise blood cholesterol similar to saturated fat. Hydrogenation creates “trans-fatty acids.”

LDL- Low Density Lipoprotein. Often tagged the “*BAD*” cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol travels through the blood stream depositing cholesterol on artery walls, and making cholesterol available for cell structures, hormones and nerve coverings.

Minerals- Essential elements other than carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, nutritionally necessary in very small amounts. Minerals are inorganic elements, such as calcium and iron, and are found in our food and water.

Monounsaturated Fat- A fat in which there is one space left unfilled by hydrogen atoms. “Monos” are a better choice of fats to use instead of saturated fats. From most to least monounsaturated: olive oil, canola, avocado, peanut.

Omega-3 fatty acids- Beneficial in a number of ways particular to cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. Good sources include fish, flaxseed, and soy beans. Still 9 cal/gm like other fats, proteins and carbohydrates are 4 calories/gram.

Phytochemicals- From the Greek word for plant, among their intriguing talents is an apparent ability to block the multiple processes that lead to cancer, heart disease and other health problems.

Polyunsaturated Fat- A fat in which there are two or more spaces unsaturated by hydrogen atoms, allowing this fat to remain liquid at room temperature. Polyunsaturates include safflower, sunflower, sesame, nut oils, and soy oils.

Protein- Vital for life and provides energy and structure support of body cells and is also important for growth. Made from amino acid building blocks that contain nitrogen. All food except fruit and pure fat contain protein.

Saturated Fat- A fat in which all available hydrogens are attached to each carbon in the chain. Primarily found in animal foods, this type of fat is solid a room temperature. Diets high in saturated fats have been linked to higher blood cholesterol levels.

Soluble Fiber- Found in fruits, some legumes, vegetables, and grains, such as cooked dried beans, oats, and barley. Dissolves in water to form a gel. Soluble fiber binds to cholesterol thus preventing its reabsorption. **Insoluble fiber** does not dissolve in water (found in wheat bran and vegetables), helps to prevent or treat constipation. Both are healthy and necessary.

Trans Fatty Acid- A fat that has undergone “hydrogenation”, that is, an unsaturated fat that has had hydrogen atoms mechanically attached to all available spaces, making it a saturated fat. Margarine undergo this process, as well as many baked goods to preserve shelf life. After this process, some of the atoms arrange in a “trans” form, a form unrecognized by our bodies as food. This situation has been linked to a variety of health problems, including cancer. Look for the word “*hydrogenated*” on the label.

Vitamins- Essential substances, found in small amounts in many foods, necessary for controlling body processes. Vitamins, unlike minerals, are organic compounds containing carbon. Vitamins include vitamin A, B vitamins (such as thiamin, niacin, riboflavin) and vitamin C, among others.