

Why is Fat Important for Our Bodies?

Before Getting Started...

Take a few minutes to discuss the following questions with your nutritionist:

- What words come to mind when you hear the word “fat”?
- What foods are good sources of fat?
- How do you think your body uses fat from food?

The Facts on Fat

The word “fat” has two different meanings:

- Fat is a nutrient found in foods and drinks (also called dietary fat) that gives our bodies energy.
- Fat is also a storage tissue in our bodies (also called body fat) that provides us with energy reserves, protection, and insulation during hot and cold temperatures.

Both dietary fat and body fat have many important roles in the body. Here are a few:

Dietary Fat

- Keeps skin soft, hair smooth, and nails strong
- Supports a healthy brain to think clearly, learn, and preserve memory
- Enhances the flavor and taste of food and drinks
- Increases absorption of vitamins A, D, E, and K, which keep bones growing strong

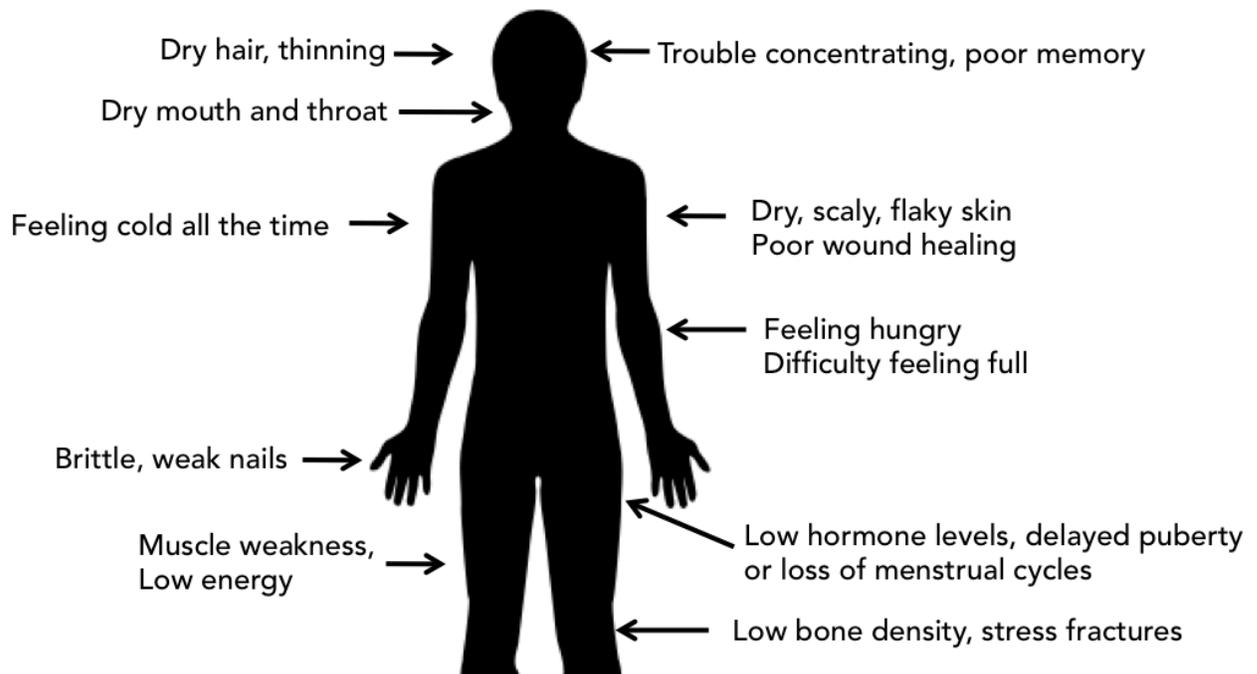
Body Fat

- Balances hormones needed for puberty and interest in relationships and sex
- Provides long-term energy to get you through sports and exercise
- Regulates temperature to keep you warm in the winter and cool in the summer
- Protects you from sports injury and bone fractures



What Happens If I Don't Eat Enough Dietary Fat or Have Enough Body Fat?

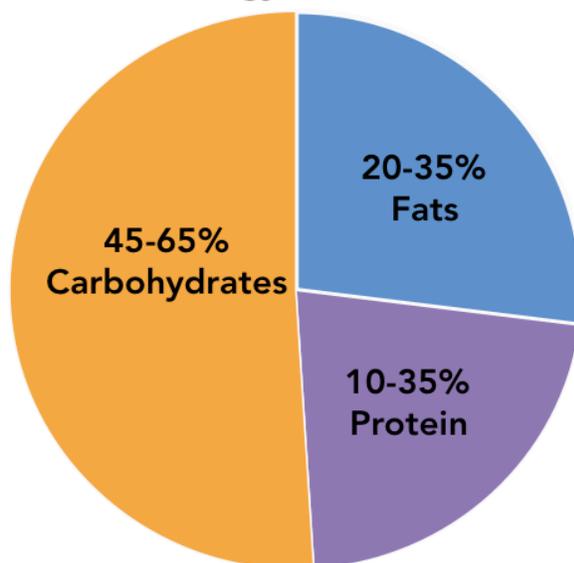
Signs of Inadequate Fat



How Much Dietary Fat Does My Body Need?

The amount of fat that your body needs varies depending on your overall energy needs.

Recommended Percent of Energy From Food



Generally, it's important to try to have a source of fat at all meals and most snacks.

Breakfast Examples:

- Nuts and fruit in yogurt
- Cheese on an egg sandwich
- Whole milk with cereal

Lunch/Dinner Examples:

- Avocado slices on a bean burger
- Oil used for sautéed veggies
- Butter spread on bread roll

Snack Examples:

- Peanut butter with crackers
- Chia seeds in pudding or oats

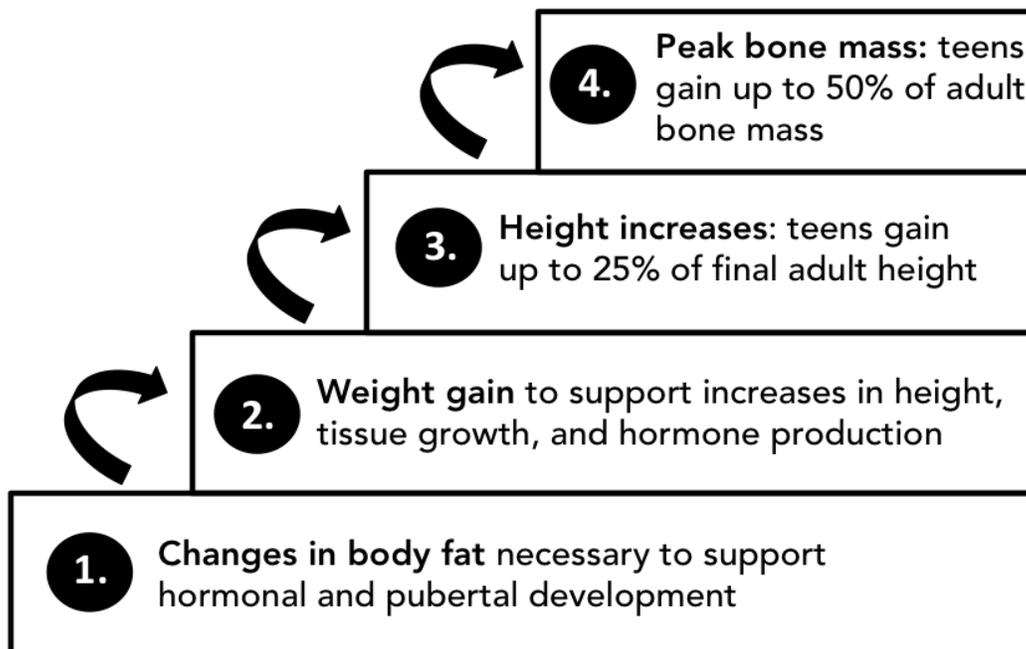
Why Are Changes In Body Fat Healthy and Essential During Puberty?

“Fat” is often used to describe someone’s body negatively, but body fat is necessary for survival and reproduction. Peoples’ bodies function best at different levels of body fat depending on many factors like your gender and stage of growth.

Out of all the stages of life (from infancy to elderly), the most rapid changes in height, weight, and body composition happen between 11 to 18 years old. These changes that teens experience are normal and essential for the body’s hormones, bones, and muscles to continue to do their job.

This diagram shows the steps that every teen should experience during puberty in order to reach their peak height and develop into a healthy adult.

Steps to Healthy Growth and Development



Questions For You:

- Which of these facts is most surprising to you?
- Why do you think these changes in body composition (body fat, muscle mass, and bone mass) are important for teens?

It’s important to remember that teens grow and develop at different ages and over different periods of time. So, comparing your body size to your friend’s is like comparing apples to oranges- it’s impossible!

What Does This Mean For Me?

Take a few minutes to think through the information shared in this handout and answer the questions listed below:

1. What are some foods that you eat or used to eat that provide your body with dietary fats?
2. Have you noticed any signs that your body may not be getting enough fat from foods?
3. What are some ways you feel comfortable making changes to your eating?

References:

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