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Refreshing Summer Smoothie

1 small banana

1/2 c frozen organic berries (can substitute any frozen fruit)

1/3 c whole milk, plain yogurt (can substitute goat yogurt or cottage cheese)

1-2 tbsp. ground flax seeds

1/4 c water (can substitute milk, coconut milk or nut milk)

Optional: whey powder, stevia, honey, flax oil or a little juice for sweetening. Be careful with your sugars!

Place ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. If adding whey powder, add in after fully blended. This smoothie can also be turned into healthy popsicles for the kids, OR YOU!



Not all fats are equal

Did you ever think that maybe you weren't consuming enough fat...in particular, healthy fat? Well what the heck is good fat these days?

There are so many opinions and so much information on fat that it gets to be very confusing – it leads to excessive weight gain, you shouldn't eat any, it leads to high cholesterol... Getting the right fats in my diet has given me better control of my weight, AND it satisfies me a lot quicker than that entire bag of tortilla chips.

"Since the early 1970s, American's average intake of fat has dropped from 40% of total calories to 34%. Refined carbohydrates have replaced the fat consumption, and then some. Meanwhile, obesity in America, which remained constant from the early 1960s through 1980, has surged upward since then – from 14% of the population to over 22%." -- The Diabetes Solution, by Dr. Richard Bernstein

Refined carbohydrates include chips, cereals, breads, pasta, pastries, crackers, candy, cookies, etc. Could it be that those refined carbohydrates just don't give us what we need so we continue to gorge ourselves until we feel satisfied? Fat actually sends a signal to our brain to let us know that we have had enough. Refined carbohydrates on the other hand break down into sugar which causes our body's insulin levels to rise and fall very quickly, which leads to constant hunger.

Fat, otherwise called lipids or fatty acids, are classified into three major categories:

Saturated: Highly stable. Typically will not go rancid and form free radicals which damage our cells. They are solid or semisolid at room temperature. Your body makes saturated fatty acids from carbohydrates, and they are found in animal fats and tropical oils (palm and coconut).

Monounsaturated: Like saturated fats, they are relatively stable. Do not go rancid easily and hence can be used in cooking. Tend to be liquid at room temperature. Your body makes monounsaturated fatty acids from saturated fatty acids. They are also commonly found in olive oil, as well as the oils from almonds, pecans, cashews, peanuts and avocados.

Polyunsaturated: The two most common include omega-6 and omega-3 oils. Your body cannot make these fatty acids thus they are called "essential" and must be obtained from the foods we eat. They go rancid easily, particularly omega-3s, and must be treated with care. They are liquid, even when refrigerated, and these oils are highly reactive. Polyunsaturated oils should never be heated or used in cooking. Omega-6 oils, from safflower, sesame, sunflower, soy, canola and corn oils, if eaten in excess, can be inflammatory. Omega-3 oils are anti-inflammatory and can be found in hemp, flax seeds, pumpkin seeds, walnuts, dark green vegetables and cold water fish (salmon, anchovies, sardines, mackerel and herring).



With the advent of convenience foods, we have altered and heated oils to very high temperatures turning them into very harmful trans-fatty acids (this allows them to sit on shelves for long periods of time without the food going bad). This unfortunately is what has given fat the bad rap and has really been the culprit in heart disease. Trans-fatty acids include margarine, fried foods, Crisco, and polyunsaturated fats that are made to become solid at room temperature (remember these should never be heated because they are easily damaged which then damages us).

So back to the original question of, what are good fats? Good fats come from a variety of sources like nuts, seeds, grains, vegetables, avocados, animal fats, olive oil and coconut oil – the foods that don't come in a box. Also, be sure to not heat polyunsaturated oils because they cause damage to our cells. Instead, use olive oil, peanut oil, coconut oil or butter when cooking. With the consumption of so many damaged oils, our bodies need even more omega-3 oils to help reduce inflammation. Try flax oil on your salad every now and then, or put some ground flax seeds into a smoothie. Fats are an essential part of our diet – just be sure to get the right kinds!

FAT FACTS

- A Harvard study of forty thousand nurses found that the 20% with the lowest fat intake had the highest rate of cancer.
- Eskimo's had normal cholesterol levels for thousands of years on a diet containing 75% sea animal fat.
- Mediterraneans are notably free of heart disease, although they consume diets containing 40% fat (mostly from olive oil).
- We all need the essential fat-soluble vitamins A and E that low-fat diets jeopardize. Some of the most dramatic functions of vitamins A and E are to maintain our immune system and our eyesight and to protect against stroke and liver disease.
- Every cell in the body is protected by a lining of fat to keep out harmful microbes.
- Our endocrine glands require fat in order to construct hormones like estrogen and testosterone.
- The brain is 60% fat so we need to feed it if we want to keep going.
- Essential fats are converted into prostaglandins, which regulate all body functions at the cellular level. Prostaglandins control blood pressure, clotting, inflammation, allergies, sodium, water excretion and tumor growth.
- Fat is required for the production of serotonin, which elevates mood and promotes good sleep.
- Omega-3 fats raise our metabolic rate so that we burn calories briskly.

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