Nutrition Questions?
Ask the Dietitian
Fat in the Diet

Q: I've been thinking about cutting fat out of my diet to lose weight. Is this a good idea?

A: There is a lot of information out in the media today about fats, especially fat elimination diets. However, fats are actually an essential part of our diet and it’s important for us to get the proper amount in our diet.

How much fat should I be eating each day?
A person should consume about 20-35% of their daily calories from fat. Most of these calories should come from “good” fats rather than “bad” fats. Bad fats are termed saturated fats and trans fats and put us at a greater risk for developing diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity. Saturated and trans fat increase our LDL cholesterol, which is the “bad” cholesterol in our body, and decrease our HDL cholesterol, which is the “good” cholesterol in our body. Good fats, which are termed polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, decrease our risk for developing diseases by lowering the “bad” cholesterol and maintaining the “good” cholesterol.

What are some examples of good fat and bad fat?
Bad fats are typically solid fats like butter, lard, shortening, and coconut oil. Be aware that some saturated and trans fat may also be found in liquid foods, such as milk. Good fats are typically oils that come from plants such as olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil, sunflower oil, sesame oil, and corn oil. They can also come from plant foods such as avocados, peanut butter, nuts, and seeds.

What’s the hype about coconut oil?
There is a lot of talk right now about coconut oil being a healthy superfood, but coconut oil is actually very high in saturated fats, which as we know are detrimental to our health. It’s true that coconut oil does not have any cholesterol, but there is not enough scientific evidence to support the claims that coconut oil can aid in Alzheimer’s prevention or weight loss. If you have questions, check out eatright.org or consult a registered dietitian.