FATS

Everyone needs to consume fats to maintain good health. There are different types of fats, some being healthier than others. When eaten in large amounts, all fats, including healthy fats can contribute to weight gain, as fat is higher in energy than any other nutrient.

Types of fats

Unsaturated fats: these are "good" fats that lower disease risk and include polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats.

Polyunsaturated fats include:
- Omega-3 fats, which have anti-inflammatory properties and are crucial for brain, nerve, and eye development and cardiovascular health. There are three types:

ALA (alpha linolenic acid)
DHA (Docosahexaenoic acid)
EPA (Eicosapentaenoic acid).

Omega-3 fats are found in fatty fish e.g., salmon, mackerel, anchovies, sardines, trout, eggs, flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, soybeans, tofu, and fortified foods.

Omega-6 fats, which play an important role in proper brain development, metabolism and normal growth and development. They help regulate genes, promote immune health, and blood clotting. Omega-6 fats are found in nuts (e.g. Brazil), seeds and vegetable oils, i.e., extra virgin olive oil (EVOO), grapeseed oil, canola oil and soybeans.

Monounsaturated fats can help lower LDL cholesterol levels, reducing the risk for heart disease and stroke and help to develop and maintain cells. They are liquid at room temperature but harden when chilled and found in plant foods such as nuts, avocados, and vegetable oils.

Saturated fats: are unhealthy dietary fats and can increase the risk of heart disease. Only small amounts should be consumed. They are solid at room temperature e.g., butter, coconut oil, palm and palm kernel oils, animal fat. Foods high in saturated fats include:
·Baked goods e.g., cakes, biscuits, doughnuts, pastries
·Fried foods e.g., fried chicken, chips, seafood
·Fatty or processed meats e.g., bacon, sausages, meat with skin or fat, hamburgers, steak
·Whole-fat dairy products

Trans fats: are unhealthy fats and can increase the risk of heart disease and other health problems. They are found in fried, packaged and/or processed foods.

Eating trans fats can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease by raising LDL (bad) cholesterol, lowering HDL (good) cholesterol, causing cholesterol to build up in the arteries, thereby increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease, heart disease and stroke.

Eating a lot of trans fat can also lead to weight gain, increasing the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and other health problems e.g., fatty liver, metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance.