

Confused about fat? Here's a crash course to help you distinguish the good from the bad. There are three types of fat: monounsaturated, polyunsaturated and saturated. Monounsaturated fats – including olive oil, sesame oil, canola oil, almond oil, flax oil and fish oil – are good fats. These contain essential fatty acids, such as omega-3 and gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), that are critical to brain development and function, skin health, vascular health, proper immune system function, fertility and normal physical development. Polyunsaturated fats, such as margarine, corn oil, hydrogenated safflower oil and sunflower oil, also contain essential fatty acids. Unfortunately, these fats are also highly refined and contain large amounts of trans fat. And trans fat, created by hydrogenating vegetable oil to make it spreadable, can play a role in both cancer and heart disease. Saturated fats are the bad kind of fat and include butter, peanut oil, coconut oil, palm kernel oil and lard. These saturated fats elevate cholesterol and triglyceride levels, leading to an increased chance of heart attack and stroke. These oils are best avoided.(LifeScript)

FIGHT FAT AT NIGHT Those eight hours after your head hits the pillow aren't just for dreaming. While you sleep, your body actually repairs and rebuilds your muscles. But, if you eat too close to bedtime, your body will spend its energy digesting the food in your tummy and not recuperating your muscles. Worse yet, your metabolism slows at night, which means many of the calories you eat late in the evening will be stored as fat. Unfortunately, many of us are late-night snackers and need to learn to overcome these urges. The most important thing you can do is eat enough during your day. Skipping meals will slow down your metabolism and make you susceptible to late-night binges. Many people eat a lot before bedtime not because they're hungry, but because they are bored, tired, lonely, or depressed. Ask yourself if you are truly hungry before you even step into the kitchen or dip into your snack stash.(LifeScript)

SMART PROTEIN They say fish is brain food, and I say it's certainly a smart choice – for your muscles, that is! You need a healthy dose of daily protein to help create new lean muscle, and fish is one of the best protein sources around. Besides being a source of quality protein, certain types of cold-water fatty fish also contain beneficial levels of omega-3 fatty acids. Among their many benefits, these special fats have been shown to help reduce muscle soreness after a workout. Omega-3s also help boost your mood, reduce your appetite and give your skin a radiant glow. Which type of fish should you eat? I recommend you stick with wild salmon, which is very rich in omega-3s. Also, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, salmon is the least likely fish to contain contaminants such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and mercury, making it safe for consumption, especially by pregnant and nursing women. (LifeScript)