



Grains of truth about LOW-FAT PASTA TOPPINGS

Definitions

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Health and Human Services recommend eating five to ten ounces of bread, cereal, rice and pasta daily (depending on age, gender and activity level), with half of them coming from whole grain foods. Nutritionists suggest that 45 to 65 percent of the daily caloric consumption come from carbohydrates, but only 50 percent are consumed as such. The guidelines also suggest that no more than 35 percent of your total daily calories come from fat, with most fats coming from polyunsaturated and monounsaturated sources. Count less than 10 percent of calories coming from saturated fats, less than 300 mg per day of cholesterol and keep trans fats as low as possible. That means that some foods with more than 35 percent fat should be averaged with others that have less. The key: consume more grain foods and lighten up the high-fat spreads and toppings. Remember, serving sizes are small: one ounce equals half a cup of cooked pasta.

Calculating fat

Many people are confused when it comes to calculating grams of fat needed according to their required caloric consumption. To determine how many grams of fat are needed daily:

1. Multiply the number of calories usually eaten daily by 0.3 for 30 percent of the total, 0.25 for 25 percent and 0.2 for 20 percent, etc.

2. Divide that number by 9 (the amount of calories in one gram of fat). For instance, 1,800 calories a day multiplied by 0.25 equals 450 calories. Divide 450 by 9 and the daily fat allowance is 50 grams.

To determine what percentage of calories in a food item are from fat:

1. Multiply the number of fat grams in a food by 9 (the number of calories in one gram of fat).

2. Divide that number by the total number of calories in the food.

3. Multiply that number by 100 to get the percent. Balance high-fat choices with low-fat meals throughout the week.

Nutritional value

Both whole wheat and white pasta are high in complex carbohydrates and low in fat, calories and sodium. The protein in pasta contains six of the eight essential amino acids in ample supply. When combined with meat, beans or dairy products, all the essential amino acids are present. Pasta also contains iron.

Consider these low-fat options:

- Choose tomato or vegetable-based sauces.
- For cream sauces, use low-fat milk or evaporated skim milk; non-fat yogurt; fat-free mayonnaise; or low-fat or fat-free sour cream.
- Top pasta with herbs and spices and a sprinkle of Parmesan cheese.
- Combine with lean cuts of meat, skinless poultry and fish.
- Use a blender or juicer to create vegetable purees with favorite herbs and spices.
- Add legumes, such as beans and lentils.

When choosing which type of fats you will add to your recipes, keep in mind that mono- and poly-unsaturated fats are the preferred type. Olive, canola and peanut oils are primarily mono-unsaturated while sunflower, safflower and corn contain poly-unsaturated oils. Coconut and palm kernel oils and animal fats are more highly saturated and may raise blood cholesterol levels. Also, watch for any hydrogenated fats or oils. These may contain trans fats that also tend to raise blood cholesterol levels. While saturated and trans fats can be part of a healthy diet, they should be limited to less than 10 percent of the total calories.



Use these tips with any one of the variety of popular pasta products:

Acini de pepi	Angel Hair	Cappelini
Ditalini	Egg Noodles	Elbow
Fettuccine	Fusilli	Gemelli
Lasagna	Linguine	Macaroni
Mafalda	Manicotti	Mezzani
Orzo	Penne	Rigatoni
Rotini	Shell Pasta	Spaghetti
Spinach Noodles	Spirals & Twists	Tagliatelle
Tripolini	Tubettini	Tufoli
Vermicelli	Ziti	

Recipes

Uncooked	Yield, cooked
8 ounces spaghetti	4 to 5 cups
8 ounces elbow macaroni	4 1/2 cups
8 ounces egg noodles	4 cups

Follow package directions for best results.

Fettuccine Alfredo Light*

12 ounces	fettuccine noodles
1 cup	evaporated skim milk
1/3 cup	grated Parmesan cheese
	freshly ground black pepper to taste
2 tablespoons	chopped fresh parsley

Prepare pasta according to package directions; drain. In a large saucepan, bring the evaporated milk to a simmer over medium heat. Stir in the Parmesan and pepper. Stir until creamy; pour over fettuccine. Add parsley; toss well and serve. Makes 4 servings.

Nutrient Analysis: One serving provides approximately: 192 calories, 11 g protein, 2 g fiber, 30 g carbohydrates, 3 g fat (1 g saturated), 38 mg cholesterol, 58 mcg folate, 259 mg calcium, 38 mg potassium, 1mg iron, 210 mg sodium.

Light Tomato Sauce*

12 ounces	pasta
1 medium	onion, chopped
2 cloves	garlic, minced
6 medium	fresh tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped
1/2 tablespoon	sugar
1/2 teaspoon	basil flakes
1/4 cup	red wine

*Source: National Pasta Association.

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Prepare pasta according to package directions; drain. Sauté onion and garlic in large skillet coated with vegetable spray. Add remaining ingredients and simmer 15 to 20 minutes, then combine with pasta. Makes 4 servings.

Nutrient Analysis: One serving provides approximately: 196 calories, 7 g protein, 4 g fiber, 38 g carbohydrates, 2 g fat (0 g saturated), 28 mg cholesterol, 79 mcg folate, 32 mg calcium, 618 mg potassium, 2 mg iron, 28 g sodium.

Pasta Salad

10 ounces	rotini pasta
1 1/2 cups	broccoli, cut into florets
1 15-ounce	can red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
1 large	red or green bell pepper, chopped
1/3 cup	onion, chopped
4 ounces	mozzarella cheese, cubed or grated
1 2-ounce	can chopped ripe olives
1 large	carrot, diced
8 ounces	lean, cooked roast beef, cut in julienne strips
2/3 cup	(or to taste) low calorie or fat-free Italian dressing

Cook pasta according to directions. Drain and rinse with cold water. Pour boiling water over broccoli, drain and rinse immediately with cold water. Combine with remaining ingredients and pasta and chill before serving. Makes 6, main dish servings.

Nutrition Analysis: One serving provides approximately: 353 calories, 26 g protein, 9 g fiber, 38 g carbohydrates, 11 g fat (5 g saturated), 51 mg cholesterol, 109 mcg folate, 183 mg calcium, 325 mg potassium, 3 mg iron, 601 mg sodium.

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