

Air popped popcorn as part of a no-fat diet ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I have recently started the "I don't want any fat kick" and have come up with a small item that maybe you can help me with. I love popcorn without butter and have heard that popcorn cooked in a hot air blower contains over 50 percent fat. Is this true, and why is it?

? Popped

Answer

Dear Popped,

Popcorn is a great snack to kick start a healthy eating plan, as it is high in complex carbohydrates and fiber. One cup of popped corn, cooked in an air popper contains 30 calories and practically no fat. A cup of oil popped popcorn, topped with a tablespoon of butter and a dash of salt has approximately 155 calories, 14 grams of fat and 200 milligrams of sodium. Microwave popcorn products are often packed in saturated coconut or palm oil, and some come with additional butter. There are even "light" microwave versions that derive 45 percent of their calories from fat. If you're keen on avoiding fat, your best bet is to air pop your own kernels without adding any butter or oil, then season to taste with garlic or onion powder, chili powder, nutritional yeast flakes, or a small amount of grated cheese.

The no- to extremely low-fat diet craze that was popular in the 1980s and 1990s has fallen somewhat out of favor, mainly because it has not been an effective method for people who are trying to lose or maintain their weight. In fact, research has found that low-fat diets (compared to low-carbohydrate and Mediterranean diets) were less effective in helping overweight people lose weight and reduce cholesterol.

While severely limiting your fat intake may seem logical if you're interested in losing body fat or building muscle, an "I don't want any fat kick" is actually unhealthy. Eating some fat is essential to health because fats act as a carrier for fat-soluble vitamins, cushion vital organs, and make up a key part of every cell membrane. A deficiency will develop if the body is deprived of fat. The most notable symptom is severely dry skin.

A diet that contains a low to moderate amount of fat (where 30 percent of your calories come from fat) may be a reasonable choice for some people. The [American Heart Association](#) ^[2] recommends that people limit saturated fats (from meat and dairy) and hydrogenated fats (found in many packaged foods). Good fats to consume include poly- and monounsaturated fats, which come from plants and are available in oils such as safflower, sesame, olive, and

canola. Nuts and avocados are also a good source of tasty and heart-healthy fats.

Depending on your goals, your diet, and your level of physical activity, the amount of fat that's right for you can vary. You can calculate your fat and other nutrient needs at Choosemyplate.gov [3]. You may also wish to speak with a registered dietician to discuss your fat intake. There's no harm in avoiding fat in your popcorn if that's your preference, but avoiding fat entirely can cause health problems and is not an effective weight management strategy. Take care,

Alice!

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