

# HEALTHY FATS

## TIPS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF FAT INTAKE

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### Abstract

The article provides information about different types of dietary fats and promotes consumption of healthy fats in moderation as part of a balanced diet. The prevalence of fat-free products in grocery stores may give some health-conscious consumers the perception that all dietary fats are unhealthy. However, fats are absolutely vital for proper physiological functioning, and it is imperative that fats are included in a healthy diet. Fats are classified as saturated, monounsaturated, or polyunsaturated. Both types of unsaturated fats, when consumed in moderation, can help lower cholesterol and decrease the risk of heart disease, especially when they replace saturated and trans fats. We provide tips for selecting healthier fats, along with a guide for consuming appropriate portions of fat.

### Tips for choosing healthy fats for your diet

The types of fat included in a diet are more important for influencing the risk of heart disease than the total amount of fat in the diet. Fats are categorized into 3 basic types: saturated, monounsaturated, and polyunsaturated. While all fats contain a mixture of these different types, we label them according to the type of fat most abundant in the mixture. Olive, canola, and peanut oils are high in monounsaturated fats, and

### Fat Facts

Everyone needs fats in a diet. There are different types of dietary fat with varying degrees of health benefits. The “good” fats that are essential to our health should be included in a balanced diet. Fats provide and store energy in the body, keep our skin soft, insulate our body, and transport fat-soluble vitamins (vitamins A, D, E and K) through the blood.

sunflower and corn oils contain more polyunsaturated fats. (See Figure below; Fat Profiles of Solid Fats and Oils – Dietary Guideline for Americans 2010).

### Choose olive, canola, or vegetable oils for cooking

- Mono- and polyunsaturated fats help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and decrease the risk of heart disease.
- Monounsaturated fats, in addition to lowering LDL cholesterol, increase HDL (good) cholesterol.
- Polyunsaturated fats lower both LDL and HDL cholesterol, so choose monounsaturated fats first.

**Tip:** For a healthier alternative to butter for bread, add your favorite chopped fresh herbs, garlic, or balsamic vinaigrette to olive oil.

### Eat less saturated fat

- Foods high in saturated fat increase blood cholesterol levels, which can increase the risk of heart disease.
- Diets high in saturated fat may increase the risk of various cancers (i.e. colorectal, breast, prostate).
- Saturated fat comes mostly from food of animal origin: beef, pork, chicken, whole milk, regular cheese, butter, egg, sausage, and bacon. Some vegetable oils like coconut and palm oil are also, high in saturated fat.

**Tip:** For salads, add olives, avocados, nuts and seeds, which have low amounts of saturated fat, instead of cheese and meat.

### Try to consume fatty fish and fish oils

- Fish and fish oils contain omega-3 fatty acids (=fat), which are essential because our bodies cannot make them on their own.
- An 8-ounce serving of fatty fish (salmon, trout, catfish, or mackerel) per week (less for young children) contains the recommended amounts.
- The space in the palm of women’s hand is a 3-oz serving of fish.
- Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should limit white tuna to 6 ounces per week and should not eat tilefish, shark, swordfish or king mackerel due to their high methyl-mercury contents.

- Eating more seafood does not have to be costly. Check the local paper and the store for sales and specials to help save money on seafood.

**Tip:** If you don’t eat fish, plant sources of omega-3 fatty acids include flaxseed oil, flaxseeds, walnuts, chia seeds, canola oil, and tofu.

### Try to avoid trans fats

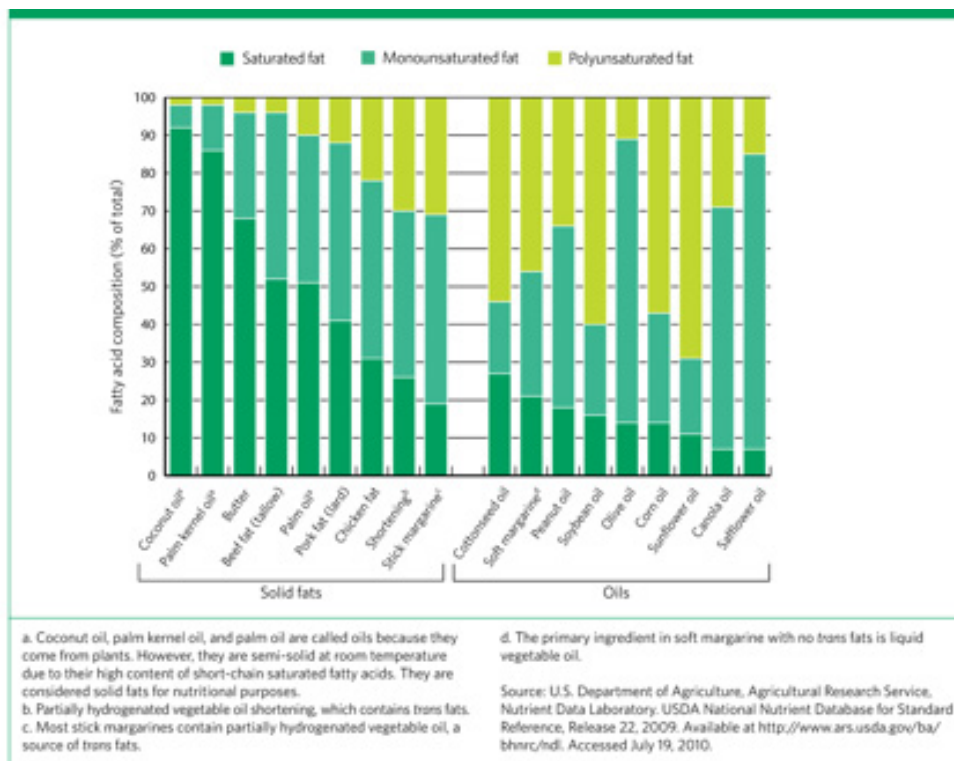
- Trans fats raise the risk of heart disease by increasing LDL levels and lowering HDL cholesterol.
- The main sources of trans fats in our diets come from partially hydrogenated (hardened) oils, which are used in some margarines and fried foods, as well as processed snack foods (cookies, crackers, chips, cakes, etc).

**Tip:** Read both the Nutrition Fact panel on the food label and the ingredients list. A food may contain 0.5 grams of trans fats or less per serving and be listed as “zero” trans fats on its food label. Check that hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils are not listed as ingredients before buying a food product.

### Follow the guideline for fat intake

- All fats contain different amounts of saturated, mono- and polyunsaturated fats. (see Fat Exchange List in Page 3).
- The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend keeping total fat consumption between 20-35% of our total calories. For a 2,000 calorie diet, about 30%, or 600 calories (67g) should come from fat per day.

**Fat Profiles of Solid Fats and Oils**



## Fat Exchange List

Each serving listed below contains 5g fat = 45 calories per serving

### Mono- and Polyunsaturated Fats:

#### Spreads, oils and dressings:

Margarine (non-hydrogenated)	1 tsp
Mayonnaise	1 tsp
Reduced-calorie mayonnaise	1 Tbsp
Corn, olive, safflower, soybean, sunflower, peanut oil	1 tsp
Salad dressing	2 tsp
Reduced-calorie salad dressing	2 Tbsp

#### Other:

Avocado (medium)	1/8 fruit
Olives (small)	10 olives
Olives (large)	5 olives

#### Nuts and seeds:

Almonds (dry roasted)	6 nuts
Cashews (dry roasted)	1 Tbsp
Pecans	2 nuts
Peanuts (small)	20 nuts
Peanuts (large)	10 nuts
Sunflower seeds	1 Tbsp
Pine nuts	1 Tbsp

#### Saturated Fats:

Butter	1 tsp
Half & Half	2 Tbsp
Bacon	1 slice
Coffee creamer (powder)	4 tsp
Coconut (shredded)	2 Tbsp
Sour Cream	2 Tbsp
Sour Cream (reduced fat)	3 Tbsp

**Tip:** The Dietary Guidelines recommend that saturated fats be kept below 10% of total calories (20g for a 2,000 calorie diet) by replacing them with healthier monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. The fat exchange list can help you balance your fat consumption to total calories by using serving sizes for various fats. (See Fat Exchange List above)

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**The bottom line: Fat is a necessary part of the diet. Choose healthy fats in moderation.**

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### ***“good” and “bad” Cholesterol***

“Good” (Healthy) Cholesterol: **HDL** (high density lipoprotein) gathers up excess cholesterol in the blood and carries it to the liver where it is excreted. HDL also helps remove some of the cholesterol deposited on the artery walls.

“Bad” Cholesterol: **LDL** (low density lipoprotein) transports cholesterol through the bloodstream and can deposit the cholesterol in arteries, leading to a buildup in artery walls that can clog the blood vessels, increasing the risk of heart disease.

### **What are omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids?**

Omega -3 and omega-6 fatty acids, the building blocks of fat, are important for your health and are essential fats. Your body needs them for many functions including building healthy cells and maintaining brain and nerve functions. Our bodies cannot produce these fats, so their only source is through eating foods that containing them.

**Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** There are three main types of omega-3 fatty acids: eicosapentaenoic acids (EPA), docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), and alpha linolenic acid (ALA), which is converted to EPA or DHA in your body. They come primarily from fatty fish. Fish with high amounts of omega-3 fatty acids include black bass, bluefish, carp, canned catfish, herring, mackerel, salmon, sardines, trout, tuna (water-packed) and whitefish. Growing evidence shows EPA and DHA are particularly important for lowering inflammation and protecting against heart disease.

**Omega-6 Fatty Acids:** Along with omega-3 fatty acids, omega-6 fatty acids play a crucial role in brain function, normal growth and development, and maintaining bone and the reproductive system health. They are found in virtually all commonly consumed food. The average diet provides plenty of omega-6 fatty acids in the form of oils, nuts and seeds.

## References

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