



## Learn how to choose the good Fats and avoid the Bad Fats

For over thirty years, fat in our diet has been considered the culprit in obesity, heart disease, and high cholesterol. Unfortunately, the resulting “low fat” foods and diets haven’t resulted in most people controlling their weight or becoming healthier. In fact, results are quite the opposite.

It’s the *type* of fat that matters in addition to how much you consume. Reducing your intake of some types of fats reduces the risk of several chronic diseases, but other types of fats are absolutely essential to our health and well-being.

### Healthy fats are essential to good health

The human body uses fatty acids to do everything from building cell membranes to performing key functions in the brain, eyes, and lungs. Some functions of fats include:

- **Brain** – Fats compose 60% of the brain and are essential to brain function, including learning abilities, memory retention and moods. Fats are especially important for pregnant women, since they are integral to fetal brain development.
- **Cells** – Fatty acids help your cells stay moveable and flexible, as well as being responsible for building cell membranes.
- **Nerves** – Fats compose the material that insulates and protects the nerves, isolating electrical impulses and speeding their transmission.
- **Eyes** – Fats are essential to eye function.
- **Digestion** – Fats in a meal slow down the digestion process so the body has more time to absorb nutrients, and help provide a constant level of energy and keeps the body satiated for longer periods of time. Fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K) can only be absorbed if fat is present.
- **Organs** – Fats cushion and protect your internal organs.
- **Immune System** – Fats ease inflammation, helping your metabolism and immune system stay healthy and functioning

### "Faces" in the Fats Families

Although all fats have the same amount of calories, some are more harmful than others: saturated fats and trans fats in particular. To understand good and bad fats, you first need to know the names of the players and some information about them...



## Fats to avoid

### Saturated fats

These fats are derived from animal products such as meat, dairy and eggs. But they are also found in some plant-based sources such as coconut, palm and palm kernel oils. These fats are solid at room temperature. Saturated fats directly raise total and LDL (bad) cholesterol levels. It is advised to avoid these as much as possible, with government guidelines recommending keeping saturated fats below 10% of dietary intake.

### Trans Fats or Hydrogenated Fats

Trans fats are actually unsaturated fats, but they can raise total and LDL (bad) cholesterol levels while also lowering HDL (good) cholesterol levels. Trans fats undergo a chemical process called hydrogenation which changes liquid oils into solid fats. These fats are used to extend the shelf life of processed foods, typically cookies, cakes, fries and donuts. When shopping, read the labels and watch out for “partially hydrogenated oil” in the ingredients. Even if the food claims to be trans fat free, this ingredient tells you that the product is a trans fat suspect.

## Replace with...

### Unsaturated fats

Monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats are two types of unsaturated fatty acids derived from vegetables and plants.

**Monounsaturated fats** are liquid at room temperature and turn cloudy when kept in refrigerator. Primary sources are plant oils like canola oil, peanut oil, and olive oil. Other good sources include avocados, olives, nuts such as almonds, hazelnuts, and pecans, and seeds such as pumpkin and sesame seeds. People following traditional Mediterranean diets, which are rich in foods containing monounsaturated fats like olive oil, tend to have lower risk of cardiovascular disease.

**Polyunsaturated fats** are also liquid at room temperature. Primary sources are sunflower, corn, soybean, and flaxseed oils, and also foods such as walnuts, flax seeds, and fish. This fat family includes the Omega-3 group of fatty acids which are “essential” fatty acids, which means it's critical for our health but cannot be manufactured by our bodies. The best sources of **Omega-3** are fatty fish such as salmon, herring, mackerel, anchovies, or sardines.



## Fat-friendly lifestyle tips: Out with the bad, in with the good

Okay, so you know you need to avoid saturated fat and trans fat... but how do you make the healthy swap?

**Dress your own salad.** Commercial salad dressings are often high in saturated fat, unhealthy chemicals, and made with inferior, overly-processed, damaged oils. Create your own dressings with high-quality, cold-pressed olive oil, flaxseed oil or sesame oil and your favorite herbs.

**What's better: butter or margarine?** Both have good and bad points. If choosing margarine check the label, avoid trans fats and partially hydrogenated oils. Regardless of whether you choose butter or margarine, use it in moderation and avoid adding it to other foods. Olive oil or avocado is a preferable substitute.

**The meat of the matter.** Beef, pork, lamb, and dairy products are high in saturated fat. Choose lean cuts of meat, and where possible opt for organic and grass fed. Enjoy full-fat dairy in moderation, alternatively make the swap for nut milks such as almond or macadamia milk.

**Don't go no-fat, go good fat.** For many products, low fat equals high sugar- yogurts are a fantastic example. In most cases the natural full-fat version is a better option. If you are concerned about your weight rather than avoiding fat in your diet, try replacing all the bad fats with good fats.

**Ask what type of oil your food is cooked in.** When eating out, ask your server or counter person what type of oil they use in their cooking. If it's partially-hydrogenated oil, run the other way. Otherwise, see if you can request your food to be prepared using olive oil, which most restaurants have in stock.