



# Facts About Dietary Fats

## What is dietary fat?

Dietary fats are one of the four macronutrients that the body needs for good health in order to work properly. The other three macronutrients are protein, carbohydrates, and water. Most fats come from meat, poultry, fish, seafood, dairy products, oils, nuts and seeds, and olives.

## What do dietary fats do for your body?

- Aid with vitamin absorption (vitamin A, D, E, and K)
- Provide essential fatty acids (omega-3 and omega-6)
- Provide energy and feeling of fullness
- Maintain healthy joints, skin and hair
- Help make hormones and maintain proper hormone balance
- Insulate the body and protect organs

## There are different types of dietary fats:

- Unsaturated fats
- Saturated fats
- Trans fats

While saturated and trans fats have health risks and should be limited, unsaturated fats have health benefits and should be a part of your daily diet.

# Healthy Fats

Unsaturated fats come from plant foods such as nuts, peanuts, seeds, avocados, oils and fatty fish. These types of fats are “healthy fats” because they decrease LDL cholesterol, increase HDL cholesterol (aka: the ‘good’ cholesterol), and lower heart disease risk.

Focus on replacing saturated fats with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.

## Sources of monounsaturated fats include:

- Avocados
- Nuts
- Peanuts
- Nut butters (peanut butter, almond butter)
- Olives
- Pumpkin seeds
- Sesame seeds
- Olive oil, peanut oil, avocado oil

## Sources of polyunsaturated fats include:

- Fatty fish (anchovies, herring, mackerel, salmon, tuna, trout)
- Seeds (chia seeds, hemp seeds, flaxseeds)
- Walnuts
- Canola oil, corn oil, flaxseed oil, soybean oil, sunflower oil

## What are some standard portions?

1 Serving of Fat = 5 Grams of Fat

- 1 tsp oil, butter, or mayonnaise
- 1 tbsp salad dressing
- 2 tbsp avocado
- 1.5 tsp peanut butter
- 6 almonds, 16 pistachios, 10 peanuts

**Unsaturated fats** are healthy fats. They include monounsaturated fats, polyunsaturated fats, and omega 3's.

**Omega-3 fatty acids** are a type of polyunsaturated fat found in chia seeds, flaxseeds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, hemp seeds, olives, avocados, and fish. They are also found in oils (avocado oil, canola oil, olive oil, safflower oil, sesame oil). Omega 3 fatty acids are especially heart healthy and can help with lowering triglyceride values in your blood.

# Saturated and Trans Fats

**Saturated fats** are solid at room temperature and come mostly from animal foods, full-fat dairy and tropical oils. Saturated fats are found in:

- Fatty cuts of beef, lamb, pork, veal, and in poultry skin and lard
- Processed meats - bacon, bologna, hot dogs, pepperoni, salami, sausage
- Full-fat dairy - butter, cream, half and half, full-fat cheese, cream cheese, whole milk, full-fat cottage cheese, full-fat yogurt, ice cream
- Baked goods - cookies, croissants, muffins, pastries
- Tropical oils - coconut and palm oils

Eating too much saturated fat raises LDL cholesterol (aka: the 'bad' cholesterol), increases your risk for heart disease, and worsens insulin resistance.

Limit saturated fats to 10% or less of your total calories. For example:

- 2,500 calories/day - limit total daily saturated fat to 27 grams or less
- 2,000 calories/day - limit total daily saturated fat to 22 grams or less
- 1,200 calories/day - limit total daily saturated fat to 13 grams or less

**Trans fats** are created through hydrogenation, a process by which oils (liquid fats) are converted into solid fats.

Food companies are able to claim "zero grams" of trans fats on the Nutrition Facts label if the amount of trans fat in the food is 0 to 0.5 grams per serving. Look for the words "partially hydrogenated oil" in the list of ingredients of packaged foods to identify trans fats.

Trans fats are found in:

- Packaged snack foods
- Fried foods
- Non-dairy coffee creamers
- Refrigerated dough products
- Baked goods - pastries, doughnuts, cookies, cracker, cakes
- Shortening and margarine

**Avoid trans fats.** They increase bad cholesterol, decrease good cholesterol, and increase risk of heart disease.

**Rule of thumb:**  
Choose foods with 3 grams or less of saturated fat per serving.



# Healthy Bodies Need Healthy Fats

## Tips for increasing healthy fats in your diet

- Eat more nuts, nut butters (peanut butter, almond butter, and sunflower butter), and seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, flax, sesame, and chia). Add them to salads, cereals, and sauces like pesto. Enjoy them as snacks.
- Make avocados a staple in your diet. Top soups, beans, and chili with avocados. Use guacamole or smashed avocado as spread on a sandwich or mix with tuna or egg salad.
- Add more fatty fish (anchovies, herring, mackerel, salmon, tuna, and trout) to your diet. Aim for 2 servings per week.
- Substitute olive oil and vinegar for ranch, blue cheese, Caesar, thousand island, and French salad dressings.

## Tips for decreasing unhealthy fats in your diet

- Replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats
- Choose low-fat, reduced fat, or non-fat dairy products
- Limit meat (beef, lamb, pork) and processed meats (bacon, bologna, hot dogs, pepperoni, salami, sausage) to two servings or less per week
- Choose lean cuts of meat like sirloin or round cuts
- Opt for “choice” or “select” when choosing cuts of meat
- Avoid foods with trans fats; remember to look for the words “partially hydrogenated oil” in the list of ingredients of packaged foods to identify trans fats
- Trim visible fat from meat and poultry before cooking
- Avoid frying foods: bake, broil, grill, roast, or stew meat, poultry, and fish
- Use rack to drain off fat when baking, broiling, or roasting meat and poultry
- Remove skin from poultry
- Chill broths, gravies, soups, and stews and skim off the hardened fat
- Avoid fried foods

Learn more at  
[dhmf.org/bakersfield/weightloss](https://dhmf.org/bakersfield/weightloss)

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11/2023  
237422DHMF