

Choose Healthy Fats

Different types of fat play a different role in your health. Some types of fat have been shown to have health benefits, whereas others are related to health risks. A good standard to go by is to replace foods higher in saturated fat with foods higher in unsaturated fats to promote health.

The Omegas

Omega-3 fats are a type of polyunsaturated fatty acid that may offer health benefits, such as:

- Promoting normal functions of the brain and nervous system
- Lowering cholesterol levels and supporting heart health
- Protecting against dry eye disease
- Reducing inflammation in the body

There are three main types of omega-3 fatty acids we get from food. Their scientific names, which can be tongue twisters, relate to their chemical structures. So, they are often referred to by three-letter acronyms:

- ALA, or alpha-linolenic acid
- DHA, or docosahexaenoic acid
- EPA, or eicosapentaenoic acid

The body cannot make omega-3 fatty acids, so you must get them through the foods you eat. Some foods and beverages may be fortified with omega-3s, for example, eggs, milk and soy drinks.

What to Eat

- Fatty fish: Salmon, herring, sardines, lake trout and Atlantic or Pacific mackerel.
- Walnuts
- Flaxseed: Your body cannot break down whole flaxseeds to access the omega-3-containing oil, so to get the health benefits, select ground flaxseed.
- Chia seeds
- Hemp seeds
- Eggs: Some chickens are given feed that is high in omega-3s so their eggs will contain more as well. When buying eggs, check the package label.

Monounsaturated Fats

These healthy fats help to increase HDL, the “good” cholesterol in the body. Eating monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats, such as vegetable oils, in place of saturated fats, such as butter and lard, may help reduce cholesterol in the body.

What to Eat

- Nuts: In addition to heart-healthy fats, nuts are a good source of protein, dietary fiber and a variety of vitamins and minerals. Just keep portion control in mind and choose unsalted ones. A portion of nuts is 1 ounce and provides approximately 160 to 180 calories. Enjoy a small handful of nuts instead of chips or other fried snacks.
- Oils: Use oils such as olive and canola in place of solid fats (e.g., butter). Use oil in salad dressing or to sauté vegetables, seafood, poultry, meat, tofu and tempeh.
- Avocado: Avocados not only contain monounsaturated fat, but also are packed with dietary fiber, potassium and vitamins (folate and vitamins B6, C and E). Try adding avocado to salad, pizza, soup, salsa, eggs and sandwiches. Enjoy avocado spread on toast for breakfast.
- Peanut butter: Nearly half the fat in peanut butter is monounsaturated fat. Resist the urge to pour off the heart-healthy oil that's separated out of natural peanut butter — mix it in!

