



A nutrition Fact Sheet



All About Fats and Oils

Do we need oils?

Oils are not a food group, but provide essential nutrients and so are included in USDA recommendations for what to eat. Fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K need fat to be transported and absorbed by the body. Note that only small amounts of oils are recommended.

What are the different kinds of fats?

Saturated fats are usually solid at room temperature and come mostly from animal sources, like butter, milk, yogurt, cheese, and meat. However, palm and coconut oil are also saturated fat. *Saturated fats should be consumed in moderation* because diets high in saturated fat have been linked to heart disease.

Trans fats have been chemically changed and are found in margarine and many store-bought baked goods. Trans fats in processed foods are listed as hydrogenated oil or partially hydrogenated oil in the ingredient list. *Trans fats should be avoided*, since they increase LDL ('bad') cholesterol and lower HDL ('good') cholesterol.

Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats are considered 'healthy fats' and are found in vegetables, fish, and nuts. These fats can help lower cholesterol. *Although all fats need to be limited, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats should make up the majority of the fats you eat.*

Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids are a very healthy type of fat that our bodies need and are found in cold water fish and other foods like soy, flax, canola oil, and walnuts.

What specific fats should we eat?

'Healthy fats' (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats) include:

- Avocados
- Canola oil
- Cold water fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring, trout, sardines)
- Nuts
- Olive oil and olives
- Soybean oil and tofu

How much fat should we eat?

Daily allowances for oils depend on age, sex, and level of physical activity. In general, the allowance for most people is 5 to 7 teaspoons of fat per day.

Examples of the amount of fat in foods

Food	Serving	Fat (teaspoons)
Avocado	1/5 th of an avocado	1
Walnuts	¼ cup	1
Vegetable oils	1 teaspoon	1
Tuna	¼ cup	0.13
Tofu	¼ cup	0.25

Another way to think about fat intake is in terms of the percent of total calories or grams of fat you eat each day.

Type of fat	Recommended percent of total calories	Calories (for 2000 calorie diet)	Grams of fat
Total	20-35%	400-700	44-78
Saturated	<10%	<200	<22
Trans	<1%	<20	<2

Comparison of the amount of fat in higher and lower fat version of the same foods

Food	Serving	Fat (teaspoons)
Whole milk	1 cup	2.0
<i>Nonfat milk</i>	<i>1 cup</i>	<i>0.2</i>
Whole milk yogurt	8 ounces	1.9
<i>Skim milk yogurt</i>	<i>8 ounces</i>	<i>0.1</i>
Ground beef, 70% lean	3 ounces	4.0
<i>Ground beef, 90% lean</i>	<i>3 ounces</i>	<i>2.5</i>
Cheddar cheese	1 ounce	2.4
<i>Cheddar cheese, lowfat</i>	<i>1 ounce</i>	<i>0.5</i>

Healthy tips for fats and oils in the diet

- Limit your intake of saturated fat by reducing full-fat dairy and meat products. Try replacing red meat with poultry, fish, beans, and nuts when possible and switch from whole milk and other full-fat dairy products to lower fat versions.
- Try to eliminate trans fats from your diet. Limit your intake of store-bought baked goods like crackers, cookies, and cakes. Check nutrition facts labels for trans fat and ingredient lists for partially hydrogenated oil.
- Choose unsaturated vegetable fats and oils in moderation.
- Eat omega-3 fats and/or monounsaturated fats every day. Good sources of omega-3 fats include fish, walnuts, ground flax seeds, and canola oil.

Which oil should I use?

- **Virgin olive oil** is high in monounsaturated fat and antioxidants, but can be expensive. Olive oil is good to use in salad dressings and sautéing.
- **Canola oil** is low in saturated fat and is relatively inexpensive. Canola oil is an all-purpose oil and can be used for cooking and dressings.
- **Vegetable oil** can be made from any (or a combination of) the following: soybean, sunflower, or safflower oil. These oils are inexpensive and are mostly unsaturated fat. Vegetable oils are good for baking.

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So, what are some ways my family can eat more unsaturated fats?

- Cook with olive oil. Use olive oil for stovetop cooking instead of butter, margarine, or lard.
- Use healthier oils and fats in baking. Try canola or vegetable oil instead of butter or margarine.
- Eat more avocados. Check for lower prices when avocados are in season. Add avocados to sandwiches or salads.
- Add nuts. Sprinkle a few nuts on salads or hot cereal.
- Make your own salad dressing. Create your own healthy dressing with 3 Tablespoons olive oil, 2 Tablespoons vinegar, salt, and pepper. Garlic, Italian seasoning, lemon juice, or mustard can be added for flavor.

Remember – you want to replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats – not just add more fat to your diet!

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