

# Fats

Fats are essential nutrients that play a crucial role in our health. Healthy fats, specifically unsaturated fats, are beneficial for various bodily functions and should be included as part of a balanced diet. Here's what you need to know about healthy fats:

## Types of Healthy Fats

### Monounsaturated Fats

Olive oil, avocados, nuts (like almonds, cashews, and peanuts), and seeds (such as sesame and pumpkin seeds).

**Benefits:** Helps reduce bad cholesterol levels (LDL cholesterol) and lowers the risk of heart disease.

### Explain the Social Influences

**Includes:** Omega-3 fatty acids (found in fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, and trout), and Omega-6 fatty acids (found in oils like soybean, corn, and sunflower oil).

**Benefits:** Supports brain function, reduces inflammation, and promotes heart health.

## Importance of Healthy Fats

**Energy:** Fats provide a concentrated source of energy, essential for fueling daily activities.

**Vitamin Absorption:** Fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K) require dietary fats for absorption in the body.

**Cellular Function:** Fats are integral to the structure and function of cell membranes.

## Recommended Intake

1. The American Heart Association suggests that healthy fats should constitute about 25-35% of total daily calories.
2. Focus on replacing unhealthy saturated and trans fats with healthier unsaturated fats.



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## Sources of Healthy Fats

- 1. Nuts:** Almonds, walnuts, pistachios, and macadamia nuts.
- 2. Seeds:** Chia seeds, flaxseeds, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds.
- 3. Avocados:** Rich in monounsaturated fats and fiber.
- 4. Fatty Fish:** Salmon, trout, sardines, and mackerel (rich in Omega-3 fatty acids).

## Tips for Incorporating Healthy Fats

**Cooking:** Use nontropical vegetable oils that are lower in saturated fat. Good choices include avocado, canola, corn, grapeseed, olive, peanut, safflower, sesame, soybean and sunflower.

**Snacking:** Enjoy a handful of nuts or seeds as a nutritious snack.

**Meal Preparation:** Add avocado slices to sandwiches or blend into smoothies for creamy texture. (Avocado toast, guacamole, salads, avocado sauces, avocado desserts, sushi)

**Fish:** Include fatty fish in your diet at least twice a week to boost Omega-3 intake.

## Animal Sources of Fats

Tend to contain lots of saturated fat and cholesterol, which can contribute to heart disease.

**Red Meat:** High-fat cuts of beef, pork, and lamb.

**Processed Meats:** Bacon, sausages, hot dogs, and deli meats.

**Dairy Products:** Full-fat milk, cheese, butter, and cream.

**Lard:** Rendered fat from pigs, often used in cooking and baking.

**Poultry Skin:** Chicken or turkey skin, which contains a high amount of fat.

**Fatty Cuts of Meat:** Prime rib, T-bone steak, and other marbled cuts.

**Organ Meats:** Liver, kidneys, and other organs, which can be high in cholesterol and fat.



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## Plant-Based Sources of Fats

Plant sources of monounsaturated fats are typically also rich in vitamins, polyphenols and polyunsaturated fats - longer-chain fats which are known to be heart-healthy. Sources of animal fats, on the other hand, tend to contain lots of saturated fat and cholesterol, which can contribute to heart disease.

## Recommendation

Replacing unhealthy saturated fats, refined carbohydrates, or trans fats with plant-based monounsaturated fats lowered the risk of heart disease, while replacing them with animal-based monounsaturated fats did not. Consuming more plant-based fats was associated with a 16% reduced risk of death from any cause, whereas consuming more animal-based fats was linked to a 21% increased risk of death from any cause.

## Healthy plant-based sources of fats include

**Avocados:** Rich in monounsaturated fats and beneficial for heart health.

**Nuts:** Almonds, walnuts, cashews, and pistachios are good sources of healthy fats.

**Seeds:** Chia seeds, flaxseeds, sunflower seeds, and hemp seeds provide essential fatty acids.

**Olive Oil:** Extra virgin olive oil is high in monounsaturated fats and antioxidants.

**Coconut Oil:** Contains medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) that may have various health benefits.

**Nut Butters:** Almond butter, peanut butter, and other nut butters offer healthy fats and protein.

**Soy Products:** Tofu and edamame are good sources of healthy fats.

**Dark Chocolate:** Contains healthy fats and antioxidants, though it should be consumed in moderation.

**Tahini:** Made from sesame seeds, tahini is rich in healthy fats and nutrients.

These sources provide beneficial fats that can support heart health, reduce inflammation, and promote overall well-being.



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## Coconut oil is considered a saturated fat

As it contains a high percentage of saturated fatty acids, primarily lauric acid. Despite being a saturated fat, coconut oil has been suggested to have some potential health benefits due to its unique composition of medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs), which are metabolized differently compared to long-chain saturated fats found in animal products.

However, the health implications of coconut oil are still debated among experts. While some studies suggest that it may have benefits such as improving HDL (good) cholesterol levels and providing a quick source of energy, other research indicates that it could raise LDL (bad) cholesterol levels, similar to other saturated fats, which may increase the risk of heart disease.

In summary, while coconut oil is a saturated fat, it can be included in a balanced diet in moderation. It's important to consider the overall dietary pattern and to prioritize a variety of healthy fats from plant-based sources like avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil.



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