

HEALTHY FATS ARE ESSENTIAL TO A WHOLE FOODS DIET

Susan Denzer, Chef and Culinary Consultant
Love + Craft Kitchen, LLC
www.loveandcraftkitchen.com

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Is fat really healthy?

When it comes to the topic of fat in our diets, Americans are understandably confused and hesitant. For many years, we were very strongly told such things as -

“Eating fat will make you fat.”

“High fat diets increase cholesterol and causes heart disease.”

“Eat only low or non-fat foods and increase carbohydrates to lose or maintain weight.”

As years passed it became evident that Americans were not only continuing to have cholesterol and other major health issues but that those issues were increasing, rather than decreasing. By now you have probably heard that research shows fat is not the enemy, at least certain types of fat, and incorporating proper fats into a balanced whole foods diet actually supports a healthy metabolism, as well as cell, nerve, brain and heart functions, and reduces inflammation which lowers the risk of disease.

Why are fats good for us?

Although each person’s nutritional needs and sensitivities will vary, fats are essential nutrients for our bodies that should be included in our daily diet. The best choices come from whole or minimally processed plant or animal sources. In addition to providing high nutrient value, healthy fats digest more slowly in our systems, providing long-term energy for our bodies.

There are three main categories of dietary fats - saturated, unsaturated and trans fats. Saturated and unsaturated fats are considered part of a healthy, whole foods diet. Trans fats are not healthy and should be avoided.

Saturated Fats

- aid in the absorption of important fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K
- integrate into our cells, supporting and protecting our brains, eyes and heart, and provide energy
- assist in weight loss or maintenance by keeping us satiated and slowly releasing energy

Unsaturated Fats - including Monounsaturated and Polyunsaturated Omega 3 and 6

- help stabilize or reduce inflammation in our bodies
- integrate into and support our cells which is especially important to eye health and brain function and development
- regulate metabolism
- stimulate hair and skin growth

- aid in bone health
- decrease LDL cholesterol while increasing or maintaining HDL cholesterol
- reduce the risk of heart disease

Trans Fats

Trans fats, or partially hydrogenated oils, were created to stabilize and extend the shelf life of manufactured food in an inexpensive way. Trans fats increase inflammation in the body and are linked to several serious diseases. Avoid consuming trans fats completely.

What should I be eating?

Both saturated and unsaturated fats are part of healthy, whole foods way of eating. The best choices are those fats that are in their natural or minimally-processed state.

SATURATED FATS	UNSATURATED FATS		TRANS FATS
	Monounsaturated	Polyunsaturated Fats	Hydrogenated or Partially Hydrogenated Oils
<p><u>Choose whole, less-processed options:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dairy products (full-fat, whole milk, butter, cream, cheese) • meat and poultry (“pastured”, “grass-fed”, “free-range”, “organic”) • processed meats (bacon, sausage, other - avoid preservatives, sugar or additives) • chocolate coconut and palm oil • coconut milk • cocoa / chocolate 	<p><u>Good options:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • almonds • avocados • cashews • lard (un-hydrogenated) • olives • extra virgin olive oil • peanuts • sesame seeds • eggs • cocoa / chocolate 	<p><u>Omega 3</u> <u>Choose more:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fish and seafood • flax seeds, oil, meal • chia, pumpkin and sesame seeds • walnuts, Brazil nuts • avocados • eggs • dark green leafy vegetables <p><u>Omega 6</u> <u>Choose some:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimally-processed nut and plant-based oils • eggs • sunflower and pumpkin seeds • pine nuts, pistachios • acai <p><u>Avoid:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • highly processed nut and plant-based oils (vegetable, corn, soybean, safflower) 	<p><u>AVOID ALL:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • margarine • shortening • packaged baked goods and snacks • highly processed foods

How much fat is okay?

Drs. Julie Briley and Courtney Jackson, authors of *Food as Medicine Everyday* (NCNM Press, 2016) provide the following guidelines for including healthy fats with every meal along with appropriate portions sizes of vegetables, whole grains, low/less processed protein and fruit -

“Include 1 to 2 sources of healthy fat per meal -

- 1 tablespoon butter or oil (coconut, olive oil; 11 - 16 grams)
- ½ medium avocado (11 - 15 grams)
- ¼ cup nuts or seeds (14 grams)
- 1 cup olives (15 grams)
- 3 tablespoons shredded coconut (10 grams)
- ¼ cup full-fat coconut milk (12 grams)
- 1 cup whole milk or yogurt (9 grams)
- 1 ½ ounces of cheese (13 - 15 grams)”

(Briley & Jackson, 2016, pp. 81, 88)

How do I incorporate healthy fats into my diet?

Here are 28 simple ways to add healthy fats into your daily meals.

Avocados

- Garnish soups, stews, salads, chili, eggs, grains
- Make avocado cream as a condiment or dip for meat, seafood and vegetables
- Use in baked goods - cake, quick bread, chocolate frosting

Butter or Ghee, Animal Fat

- Use for sautéing meat or poultry, vegetables or eggs
- Brush butter or ghee on meat or poultry during the last few minutes of cooking to add extra flavor
- Toss with vegetables before roasting

Coconut Oil

- Use in baked goods
- Whisk into coffee, tea or smoothies until creamy and emulsified
- Use for high heat cooking - stir-fries, roasting, searing

Coconut Milk

- Chill and whip for a creamy topping
- Add to soups, sauces, stews, dips, smoothies
- Make coconut milk kefir

Cocoa / Cacao / Chocolate

- Add cocoa powder or cacao to chili or stew for depth of flavor
- Savor a piece of 70% or higher dark chocolate or cacao after dinner

Dairy

- Add soft or hard cheeses as garnish to vegetables, fruit, meats or seafood
- Prepare a kefir and fruit or vegetable smoothie
- Make fruit and yogurt frozen pops (with no added sugar)

Nuts, Seeds, Olives

- Use as snacks or as part of an appetizer tray
- Prepare a tapenade or nut / seed butter (with no added sugar)
- Add to grains, salads, stews, soup, other main dishes, baked goods, spreads and dips

Nut and Seed Butters

- Add to curry sauce for a flavor variation
- Make a dipping sauce for meat, poultry or vegetable skewers
- Serve on whole grain or gluten-free crackers or with fruit and vegetables as a snack
- Add to a smoothie

Olive and Avocado Oil

- use in salad dressings or vinaigrettes
- add avocado oil to tomato salsa for increased antioxidant absorption
- drizzle over hummus, vegetables, pesto, soup, stew, chili, pizza, polenta, popcorn
- use in baked goods in place of highly processed oils

For further information on the topic of healthy fats, see -

- Dr. Axe - "[11 Best Healthy Fats for Your Body](#)"
- Harvard Health Publishing - "[The Truth About Fats: the Good, the Bad, and the In-Between](#)"
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics - "[Choose Healthy Fats](#)"
- "[Should You Really Start Eating More Saturated Fat?](#)" - Stacey, Michelle, Women's Health, March 2018, retrieved from www.womenshealthmag.com
- "[The No BS Guide to Healthy Fats](#)", Chesak, Jennifer, HealthLine Newsletter, May 2018, retrieved from www.healthline.com
- [Food as Medicine Institute](#)
- Food as Medicine Everyday - Julie Briley, ND and Courtney Jackson, ND - [from amazon.com](#)