

Not All Fats Are Created Equal-Some Are Good and Some Are Bad

Eliminating all fats (lipids) from the diet is like throwing the baby out with the bath water. Some are essential to heart health and a disease-free life.

Saturated acids are found predominantly in animal foods such as meat, and dairy products. They are solid or semi-solid at room temperature. Though they were once banned, some saturated fat is necessary for the body. They are used to fight viruses, bacteria and protozoa. Saturated acids also support the body's immune system.

If you eat beef, pork, and lamb, sources of saturated fat, make certain it is organic grass-fed (or free range.) Not only is this meat pesticide, hormone, and antibiotic free, their food source is grass. Meat from grass-fed healthy animals contain much less saturated fat than their factory-farmed counterparts (500 percent less!)

The saturated lipids in coconut, palm, and palm kernel oils is good. Unlike those in animal and dairy products, the saturated lipids in these plant foods are 'medium-chain fatty acids' (also known as medium-chain triglycerides.) One major component of coconut oil is lauric acid. This is the healthy acid found in mother's milk. 40 years of research has shown that coconut oil is good for reducing risk factors for heart disease. The saturated lipids in coconut oil yields only 6 calories when metabolized.

Monounsaturated lipids are good. They are found in avocados, some nut oils such as almond and macadamia, and olive oil. This type of lipid strengthens the immune system and helps to lower blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels. They are liquid at room temperature but becomes solid when refrigerated.

Following are some of the best sources of monounsaturated fats, and their percentage:

- Extra virgin olive oil: 73%
- Hazelnuts: 50%
- Almonds: 35%
- Brazil nuts: 26%
- Cashews: 28%
- Avocado: 12%
- Sesame seeds: 20%
- Pumpkin seeds: 16%

Polyunsaturated lipids are also good. It is a source of omega-6 acid. This lipid is found in unrefined walnut oil, sesame oil, and sunflower oil. Polyunsaturated lipids have become a detriment to our health because of the excessive amounts we get in our diet. Refined vegetable oils are used for home cooking, they are universally in almost all processed baked food, and the restaurant industry uses them.

Polyunsaturated lipids are very fragile. The refining process produces free radicals which are responsible for diseases such as cancer, asthma, Alzheimer's, etc.

Omega-3 acids are polyunsaturated. They fight inflammation and destroy free radicals. They also help stabilize blood sugar levels, improve concentration and memory (our brain cells are 60% fat), promote healthy joints, and strengthen the immune system among many other health benefits. Good sources of omega-3 lipids are cold water fish including wild salmon, herring, sardines, freshwater trout, pollock and anchovies. You should avoid fish such as tuna, swordfish, king mackerel, shark, and tilefish (from the Gulf of Mexico) because they store unacceptable levels of mercury. The types of omega-3s in cold-water fish are EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid.) Another source of omega-3 lipids (ALA- alpha linolenic acid) are flaxseeds and flax oil. Walnuts and pumpkin seeds also contain this heart healthy oil. Omega 3s also help the body to lose unwanted weight.

Conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) is a fatty acid. This acid is found in animal meat and milk. However since animals are not grass-fed anymore (they are predominately fed grain), CLA in sufficient quantity is difficult to obtain in the diet. CLA has been documented to build muscle and remove fat. In a study published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 149 women and 31 men were given either CLA or a placebo on a daily basis. In a 3 month period the subjects who were given CLA lost an average of 5 pounds of body fat and gained 2 pounds of lean body mass (muscle.) A daily dosage of 3.4 grams should be taken. The best type is Tonalin. CLA also reduces inflammation. In a University of British Columbia study, people with mild-to-moderate asthma saw a complete normalization of their air passageways when they took CLA.

The process of hydrogenation which yields trans fatty acids was invented by the German scientist Wilhelm Normann in 1902. During the early to mid '80s there was a public outcry against saturated lipids in fast food products. The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) officially voiced opposition to their use. In response, the fast food industry replaced saturated lipids with trans fats. When studies showed that they were worse than saturated fats, CSPI campaigned against them in 1992.

Trans fats have various aliases on food labels. They are also known as: partially hydrogenated oils or hydrogenated oils. Avoid ALL hydrogenated products. Although the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) now (as of January 1, 2006) requires that hydrogenated oils be shown on product labels, if the amount is 1/2 gram or less, it doesn't have to be given. If this is the case, you must read the product ingredients. Hydrogenated oils are much more dangerous than the saturated lipids they replaced. They have been found to increase the blood levels of low density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL) while at the same time lowering the levels of high density lipoprotein (HDL). LDL cholesterol is the 'bad' cholesterol and HDL is the 'good' cholesterol. Hydrogenated oils also clog the arteries, are linked to type 2 diabetes and other serious health problems such as heart disease. And to compound their harmful effects, studies on velvet monkeys reveal that hydrogenated oils redistributes fat from other areas of the body to the abdominal region.

TABLE SUMMARY OF DIETARY FATS

GOOD FATS

Extra-virgin olive oil
Omega-3 fats (fish oil, krill oil, DHA & flaxseed oil)
EPA- eicosapentaenoic acid (heart & overall health)
DHA- docosahexaenoic acid (brain)

Gamma-linolenic acid (GLA)- borage oil
Conjugated linolenic acid (CLA- Tonalin)
Extra-virgin coconut oil

BAD FATS

Omega-6 oils (corn, safflower, sunflower, peanut, canola, soybean)
Saturated fats (red meat & dairy products)

UGLY FATS

Trans-fatty acids (hydrogenated & partially hydrogenated oils, margarine, shortening, Crisco Oil)

Coconut Oil is a Fat That Will Make You Thin

Coconut oil as well as palm and palm kernel oil have been misunderstood and maligned because they contain saturated fat. Though containing saturated fatty acids, these fats are not the same type as found in animal and dairy products.

This exotic oil contains medium-chain fatty acids or triglycerides. Medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) are burned as fuel by the body instead of being stored as fat. This oil contains only six calories per gram compared to the normal nine.

Vegetable oils such as sunflower, safflower, soybean, canola, peanut, and corn are composed of LCTs or long-chain triglycerides. They contain nine calories per gram. These vegetable oils are consumed in excess in the American diet, and stored as fat.

Coconut oil has been used for thousands of years. Forty years of research has shown that it is good for reducing the risk factors for heart disease. It also boosts body metabolism. Cattle ranchers in the 1940s looking to fatten up their cattle fed them this oil. They were soon disappointed because the cattle remained lean and fit.

Coconut oil increases the body's rate of metabolic activity. This is the reason why body temperature and blood pressure rises. For this reason, it is not recommended for use by those who are on hypertension medication.

Coconut oil increases thyroid activity. Body fat is burned for energy and body fat storage is minimized. This oil is now being recognized as a powerful tool in the fight against immune system diseases including AIDS. It is also the perfect oil for cooking.

I recommend replacing all vegetable cooking oils with this medium-chain triglyceride. It has a very high burn temperature which means that heat will not destroy its nutrient content.

Good Fish Are Full of Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Good fish such as mackerel and lake trout should form the bulk of America's fish intake. They are full of omega-3s which are sadly lacking in the American diet.

Omega-3s are composed of EPA and DHA. EPA provides nutrition for the cardiovascular system. It also promotes normal cholesterol and triglyceride levels, increases blood flow, and enhances immune function. DHA ensures healthy fat for the brain.

Listed below are cold-water fish and their percentage of omega-3 fatty acids:

mackerel- 1.8%

lake trout- 1.6%

herring- 1.5%

sardines- 1.4%

albacore tuna- 1.3%

salmon- 1.1%