

HEALTHY DIETARY FATS AND OILS

Some dietary fats and oils are healthy and important to include in your daily diet. These healthy oils generally fall into two categories, including: (1) monounsaturated oils (eg. olive oil and fats found in nuts and seeds, and avocado); and (2) omega 3 oils (e.g. flax oil, ground flax seeds or fish oil). The monounsaturated oils which are found in high quantities in the Mediterranean Diet, appear to be protective of cardiovascular disease, help to regulate immune function and have other health benefits too. The omega 3 oils have a variety of benefits such as anti-inflammatory effects, triglyceride and cholesterol reduction, hormonal balance, nervous system improvements and others. One important mechanism through which these effects are produced is the influence on eicosanoid metabolism. Eicosanoids include prostoglandins, leukotrienes and thromboxanes that have a variety of immunological and physiological effects.

Fats and oils are also important because they help with satiety. This can be especially important for someone with hypoglycemia and some of its symptoms, or for someone with a lot of stress. This may also have presented particular difficulties to those who have tried to follow high carbohydrate, low fat diets. It is often very difficult for people to feel satisfied on a low fat diet so they are frequently hungry and thinking about food all the time, or craving sugars and carbohydrates. This does not mean that you should eat high fat but that moderate to low fat would be best and that the healthy fats described below should be included in the diet. While some may be concerned about fat intake and weight, this should be discussed on an individual basis with quantities specified.

The following are several guidelines which you should use for selecting the best fats and oils, and fat-containing foods:

1. Include moderate amounts of monounsaturated oils in your diet.
Common sources are –
 - Extra virgin olive oil
 - Avocado
 - Nuts and seeds
 - Olives
2. The best cooking ‘oils’ are olive oil or butter, although other oils such as sesame oil or canola oil may also be used.
3. Include significant quantities of omega 3 fatty acids* in your daily diet.
As described above, these have important nervous system effects, anti-inflammatory effects, promote healthy skin and mucous membranes, decrease triglycerides and cholesterol, reduce insulin resistance and help with hormonal balance.
Common sources are –
 - Cold water fatty fish such as salmon (Chinook, Atlantic), trout, sardines, mackerel, tuna and herring
 - Flax seeds and Flax seed oil

- Walnuts and Brazil nuts
- Soybeans
- Dark green leafy vegetables

Examples of omega 3 fatty acids include alpha linolenic acid, eicosapentenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexanoic acid (DHA).

4. Reduce the quantity of omega 6 oils* such as safflower, sunflower, soybean and corn oils. Although these polyunsaturated fatty acids were considered very healthy, they should be secondary, and balanced with monounsaturated and saturated fatty acids. These oils may be used in salad dressings but should rarely be used for cooking and they should be refrigerated.

Examples of omega 6 fatty acids include linoleic acid, gamma linolenic acid (GLA) and arachidonic acid (AA).

5. **AVOID** Trans Fats or Hydrogenated and Partially Hydrogenated Oils. These fats interfere with normal metabolism and cell communication.

Common sources are –

- Margarine
- Baked goods, chips and snack foods (Read labels.)

6. Decrease quantities of saturated fats from dairy products and red meat. These may be included in low to moderate quantities, but should be discussed on an individual basis. Soy cheese may be a good substitute, and vegetarian protein sources such as beans, legumes or tofu should be considered which do not contain high levels of saturated fat.
7. Avoid cotton-seed oil since it may be exposed to more pesticides than oils that are exclusively used for cooking.
8. Refrigerate most oils (e.g. omega 6 fatty acids) and ground flax seeds. For olive oil, however, buying in smaller containers so that they may be used in one to two months is also a good option.

* Note: CURRENT RATIO of omega 6 to omega 3 fatty acids in the Standard American Diet (SAD) is 14-20:1. RECOMMENDED is 4-5:1.