

Lipids: Fats & Oils

Fats and oils are made of building blocks called fatty acids. Different fatty acids have different effects on human health. Fatty acids such as the omega 3 family promote health and help prevent degenerative diseases. However, most North Americans consume insufficient omega 3 foods and eat excessive amounts of saturated fats from animal (non-fish) sources. These saturated fatty acids are implicated in heart attacks, strokes, and cancer.

Foods high in omega 3 fatty acids should be increased or added to the average diet, and foods high in saturated fats should be avoided or decreased. Total fat intake should be decreased despite increasing omega 3 fats.

Foods High In Omega 3 Fatty Acids:

Salmon, trout, mackerel, sardines, oils of cold water fish, and flax seed oil.

Foods High In Monounsaturated Fatty Acids:

Olive oil, canola oil, and almond oil.

Foods High In Omega 6 Fatty Acids:

Richest sources- Safflower and sunflower oils,

Rich sources- Pumpkin seed oil, soybean oil, walnut oil, wheat germ oil, sesame seed oil, and rice bran oil in descending order.

Supplements- Encapsulated omega 6 oils include evening primrose oil, borage oil, and black currant seed oil.

Omega 6 fatty acids are essential for health but excessive amounts may promote cancer.

Foods High in Saturated Fatty Acids:

Beef, mutton (lamb), pork, butter, lard, coconut oil, palm oil, palm kernel oil, cocoa butter, shea nut oil, eggs, cheese (except non-fat cheese), milk (except skim milk), poultry, ice-cream, and processed foods.

Foods containing excessive saturated fat intake promotes heart disease and cancer.

Tips To Reduce Saturated Fat Intake:

- Avoid or reduce the consumption of red meats, organ meats, eggs, dairy products (except non-fat), and processed foods.
- Choose protein sources such as fish and legumes (dried peas and beans).
- When consuming meats, use lean cuts and trim excess fat, including poultry fat. Remember that lean cut beef will still contain fat even though the outer fat has been trimmed away.
- Use a fat separator (strainer) when making gravies or soup stock.
- Use skim milk or fat-free yogurt and cheese instead of regular dairy products.
- Broil, bake, boil, or water-saute foods instead of frying. To water-saute food instead of stir-frying in oil, put 1/2 to 1 cup of water or stock into a wok or skillet and bring to a rapid boil. Quickly add vegetables and keep stirring over high heat until done.

- Increasing fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in the diet will help to reduce total fat intake.

Fat Substitutes:

- Substitute fish, vegetable, or fat-free chicken stock for one-half or the whole amount of oil called for in a recipe.
- Onions, sauteed in their own juice and pureed with light miso can be substituted for butter or margarine on toast or bread.
- A very loose oatmeal puree (about 1 cup of rolled oats to 4 cups of water) can be substituted for milk to make cream soups, gravies, or any dish which calls for milk in the recipe.
- Tofu pureed with lemon juice and non-fat yoghurt can be used as substitutes for sour cream.
- Egg whites can substitute for whole eggs.

Margarine:

Margarine and shortenings contain synthetic trans-fatty acids which are implicated in heart disease and are best avoided altogether. In place of margarine or shortening, use olive oil or small amounts of butter in place of margarine. The "Better Butter" recipe below may be used in place of butter.

Better Butter Recipe:

Blend 1/4 cup of softened (or warmed) butter with 1/8 to 1/4 cup of oil such as olive, canola, high oleic sunflower, high oleic safflower, or almond oil. The best oils are organic, unrefined, unhydrogenated, cold, expeller (mechanically) pressed without solvents, and stored in opaque containers protected from light, oxygen, and heat. They should be refrigerated and consumed fresh before going rancid or spoiling.

You may add 1 to 2 tablespoons of flax seed oil to "better butter" or capsules of vitamin E, evening primrose oil, borage oil, black currant seed oil, or any other therapeutic oil depending on your particular requirement.

You may spice up "better butter" by using garlic, hot chili pepper, tarragon, sage, rosemary, thyme, lemon, honey, vanilla, bitter orange oil, or any spice of your choice. Be creative.

Use "better butter" sparingly since it still contains saturated fat.