

Fat is a nutrient necessary for your health. While various fats in foods have different effects on health, some fats offer health-protective benefits. Consider including foods with these fats, in moderation, to your meals.

Omega-3 Fats

Omega-3 fatty acids are a type of polyunsaturated fatty acid that may help lower cholesterol levels and support heart health.

What to Eat:

- **Fatty Fish:** Current dietary recommendations are to include fish in your meals at least twice per week. Fish high in omega-3 fats are salmon, albacore tuna (fresh and canned), sardines, lake trout and mackerel.
- **Walnuts:** Walnuts are an excellent plant-based source of omega-3. Add walnuts to cereal, salads or muffins. Try walnut oil in salad dressings and sautés, too.
- **Oils:** Replace solid fats such as butter or margarine with oils such as canola and soybean when cooking or baking. It works well for sautéing and stir-frying.
- **Flaxseed:** Add ground flaxseed to breakfast cereal, yogurt, baked goods including breads and muffins or mixed dishes and casseroles. Or, drizzle flaxseed oil over quinoa or use it for salad dressing. (Your body cannot break down whole flaxseeds to access the omega-3-containing oil.)
- **Eggs:** Some chickens are given feed that is high in omega-3s so their eggs will contain more as well. When buying eggs, check the package label.

Monounsaturated Fats

Monounsaturated fats improve blood cholesterol levels, which can decrease your risk of heart disease.

What to Eat:

- **Nuts:** In addition to heart-healthy fats, nuts are a good source of protein, fiber and a variety of vitamins and minerals. Just keep portion control in mind. One portion of nuts is equal to 1 ounce or 1/3 cup and provides approximately 160 to 180 calories.
- **Oils:** Use oils like olive oil in place of saturated fat, such as butter. Use it in salad dressing or to sauté vegetables, seafood, poultry and meat.
- **Avocado:** Avocados not only contain monounsaturated fat, but they are also packed with folate, vitamins E, C and B6, potassium and fiber. Try adding avocado to salad, pizza, soup, salsa, eggs and sandwiches.
- **Peanut Butter:** Nearly half the fat in peanut butter is monounsaturated fat. Resist the urge to pour off the heart-healthy oil that's separated out of natural peanut butter, and mix it in.