

# Here's the Skinny on Fats

Most of us would like to know which foods are good for us and which ones to avoid. But when you try to figure this out, do you find yourself confused and overwhelmed? You're not alone.

Dietary recommendations keep changing as we learn more how various foods affect our bodies. To make matters worse, many health professionals are still stuck in the past and haven't caught up with the latest research. The end result is conflicting advice from doctors, dietitians and other leaders in the health care arena.

One of the biggest divides is whether we should eat saturated fat. Back in the 1990s, saturated fat, such as the type in eggs, butter and meat, was demonized. We were told if you consumed saturated fat, such as cream, you'd keel over with a heart attack.

Now, however, we know that's not true. In fact, the latest research shows saturated fat is actually good for us, provided it's natural, meaning it's not corrupted with chemical additives. Saturated fat is the best means by which to raise your HDL cholesterol, also known as "good" cholesterol. You want your HDL to be as high as possible. So, by all means, eat saturated fat, provided you don't have any other intolerance to it.

For example, red meat can raise estrogen levels and inhibit weight loss, so for this reason, I eat it sparingly. Dairy products such as cream, cheese and butter cause some of us problems because of the casein, which has been linked to cancer, and allergic reactions. For these reasons some folks should limit dairy consumption, but not because of the saturated fat content.

There are fantastic sources of saturated fat. Topping the list is coconut oil. This has been linked to brain health, even

mitigating symptoms associated with Alzheimer's Disease, Parkinson's Disease, ALS and Dementia. I take a tablespoon a day and cook with it almost exclusively. It's also a natural antimicrobial so it strengthens your immune system.

Eggs are also a fantastic source of saturated fat. Recently the U.S. government reversed its previous warnings to steer clear of eggs, saying now, that the cholesterol in eggs does not translate into higher blood cholesterol. So go ahead and eat eggs, even the yolk.

The best eggs are ones that are pastured ... not to be confused with "pasteurized." Pastured eggs are from chickens that roam around outside and eat bugs, which is what they are supposed to eat. The other kinds of eggs are from chickens that eat an unnatural diet of things like corn, which is not what chickens would eat in the wild.

Another great source of fat are the Omega-3 fats, such as fish oil. The best type of fish oil is derived from wild, cold-water fish, such as salmon. Try to eat it a couple of times a week. Albacore tuna is also good. The problem with fresh fish is you don't want to eat too much of it because of the mercury content. So a good idea is to supplement with a fish oil. Get one that has the EPA and DHA amounts on the label. Take enough to get about 750 milligrams to one gram of DHA every day.

Polyunsaturated fats are wonderful, such as walnuts, almonds and other nuts, avocados and olive oil. Consume these every day, if you can. I manage to do it by making a salad each day that includes walnuts and half an avocado, topped with salad dressing made with olive oil. Hint: make your own salad dressing. It's easy, and the ones in the store are bad, even the ones that contain olive oil, because it's usually only a tiny amount of olive oil combined with other unhealthy ingredients.

On the other hand, Omega-6 oils should be avoided. These are

the vegetable oils, like soybean oil, corn oil, etc. which includes margarines and mayonnaise. Technically, Omega-6 oils are not bad for us. The problem arises when we eat too many of them compared to how many Omega-3 fats.

We should be consuming just about equal amounts of Omega-3s and Omega-6s. Most Americans, however, consume 20 times more Omega-6s than Omega-3s. That imbalance causes massive inflammation. The reason we eat so many Omega-6s is because they are in many processed, packaged foods as well as fast foods. Omega-3s, on the other hand are pretty rare, and as I stated above, are usually only consumed in cold-water fish.

Undoubtedly the worst fat of all, the one that should be avoided at all costs, is hydrogenated oil. Hydrogenated oil is also called trans fat. Like the name suggests, hydrogenated oil is oil that has been infused with hydrogen.

This process is highly unnatural. It was invented to prolong the shelf life of packaged foods, among other things. Shortening, such as Crisco, is a trans fat. Other than that, you will almost exclusively find trans fats in processed foods, especially baked goods, like cookies and crackers.

On a molecular level, trans fats are similar to plastic. Our bodies have no idea how to process them because they are completely foreign, as they are manufactured in a lab, not grown in nature. Trans fats have been strongly linked to heart disease and brain dysfunction.

The way to avoid them is to read the list of ingredients on any item you are thinking about eating. If you see the word 'hydrogenated' you know that food contains a trans fat. Do not eat it.

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