

Healthy Eating: Heart-Healthy Fats



What are heart-healthy fats?

Heart-healthy fats may help lower your risk of heart disease if you eat them in place of unhealthy fats. Eating fish instead of meat or using olive oil in the place of butter are examples.

Include these fats in an overall healthy eating plan:

- **Omega-3 fatty acids** are in oily fish such as tuna, salmon, mackerel, trout, herring, and sardines. Other good sources are ground flaxseed and flaxseed oil, soybeans, walnuts, and seeds. Omega-3 fatty acids can help lower triglycerides, a type of fat that clogs arteries.
- **Monounsaturated fats** include canola, olive, and peanut oils. Other good sources are olives, avocados, nuts, and nut butters. These fats can help lower "bad" (LDL) cholesterol and raise "good" (HDL) cholesterol.
- **Polyunsaturated fats** include vegetable oils such as safflower, sunflower, sesame, soybean, and corn oils. These fats can help lower LDL cholesterol.

What are unhealthy fats?

Unhealthy fats—if you eat too much of them—can raise your risk of high cholesterol and heart disease. Try to limit how much of these fats you eat:

- **Saturated fats** are mostly in animal foods, such as meat and dairy. Tropical oils, such as coconut oil, palm oil, and cocoa butter, are also saturated fats.
- **Trans fats** include shortening, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, and hydrogenated vegetable oils. Trans fats are in many processed foods, such as cookies, crackers, and snack foods.
- **Cholesterol** is found only in animal foods, such as eggs, whole-milk dairy foods, and meats.

General tips for healthy eating

- Fill up on fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Think of meat as a side dish instead of as the main part of your meal.
- Try main dishes that use whole wheat pasta, brown rice, dried beans, or vegetables.
- To get more omega-3 fatty acids, have fish twice a week. Add ground flaxseed to cereals, soups, and smoothies. Sprinkle walnuts on salads.
- Bake, steam, or grill foods. Use cooking spray instead of oil. If you use oil, use canola or olive oil.

How do you change to heart-healthy fats?

Use the table below to start making changes.

Ideas for switching to heart-healthy fats		
Food types	Foods high in unhealthy fats	Healthier choices
Meat, poultry, and fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular ground beef • Fatty or highly marbled cuts, spare ribs, organ meat • Poultry with skin, fried chicken, fried fish, fried shellfish • Lunch meat, bologna, salami, sausage, hot dogs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-fat ground beef (97% lean), ground turkey breast (with no skin included) • Meats with fat trimmed • Skinless chicken, baked fish • Low-fat or fat-free lunch meats
Fats and oils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coconut or palm oil • Butter, stick margarine, lard, shortening • Bacon and bacon fat • Peanut butter that has been hydrogenated (usually the no-stir kind) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canola, olive, or peanut oil • Soft margarines without trans fats • Natural peanut butter
Dairy products and eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole milk, 2% milk, whole-milk yogurt, most cheeses, cottage and cream cheese, sour cream, ice cream • Cream, nondairy creamer, half-and-half, whipping cream, whipped topping • Eggs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk and cheeses • Low-fat or fat-free yogurt • Egg substitutes, egg whites