

FAST FACTS

Healthy fats

Fats aren't bad, you just need the right ones

Fats, or fatty acids, come in various shapes and sizes, but all fats can be broadly grouped into one of 4 main categories: Saturated, monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, and trans-fatty acids. Of these, trans-fats, created by hydrogenation during food processing, have no health benefit in humans and contribute to the development of cardiovascular disease.

The remaining saturated and unsaturated fats should be consumed as part of normal healthy diet, and when it comes to healthy fats always consider quality over quantity.

What are healthy fats?

Our bodies use fatty acids to build cell membranes, synthesise an array of hormones and immune mediators, maintain a healthy body composition, and to generate energy. For these functions we need a variety of saturated and unsaturated fats mostly derived from the diet.

Some fats are considered essential fatty-acids (EFAs) meaning that our body can't make these fats, and so they must come from the food we eat. Linoleic acid (LA) and alpha linolenic acid (ALA) are the true essential fatty acids. The Omega-3 fatty acids EPA & DHA (fish oil) are also classified as essential fatty acids, although our body can produce a small amount of these fats through conversion of ALA, but this is unlikely to produce sufficient EPA & DHA, hence their classification as essential. These fat are also known as unsaturated fats due their chemical structure. Unsaturated fats are also classified as Omega3, 6, or 9 depending on their chemical structure.

Saturated fats are not considered EFAs, but are "essential" for health. Most saturated fat is derived from animal sources such as meat, eggs, and dairy, although there are some plant sources of saturated fats such as coconut oil.

How do I avoid unhealthy fats?

The easiest way to avoid unhealthy fats is to reduce or eliminate processed foods from your diet. Margarine, processed butters, poor quality cooking oils, and fried foods are all sources of rancid oils and trans-fats which are known to be inflammatory and contribute to chronic disease such as cardiovascular disease.



Where do we get healthy fats from?

The best source of healthy fats comes directly from our diet when we consume a variety of whole foods including: lean quality protein, nuts, seeds, fish, ocean greens, cold pressed, extra virgin oils, and certain fruits and vegetables such as avocado, coconut, and olives.

Sources of saturated fats:

- Lean red meat
- Chicken and poultry
- Eggs
- Coconut and coconut oil

Sources of Monounsaturated fats:

- Olives and olive oil
- Almonds, hazelnuts, pecans
- Pumpkin and sesame seeds
- Avocado

Sources of Polyunsaturated fats:

- Cold water fish
- Ocean greens
- Walnuts
- Flaxseed