

Healthy Fats the Healthy Way

Fats are always a hot topic in diet and health, but they are not all bad. Your body needs fats for many essential functions. However, the amount of fats you consume, which fats you choose, and the balance of one type of fat to another determine whether your fat intake aids your health or causes damage.

Too much of a good thing can quickly become bad. When it comes to fat, this is a motto you should adopt. Although you want to add healthy fats to your diet because they boost your health and are better for you than saturated fats, you should aim for no more than 20% to 35% of fat in your daily calories.

What are Healthy Fats?

Omega-3s and Omega-6s are the two healthy fats that make the news a lot because of their health benefits. Otherwise known as polyunsaturated fats, these offer various benefits to your body and have to be consumed through diet as the body can't produce them on its own.

Omega-3s

Omega-3s fight inflammation in the body, while lowering blood pressure. This makes them heart-healthy, too. In fact, *studies(1)* have found that when 1-gram capsules of omega-3 were given to heart attack survivors every day for three years, their risk of sudden cardiac death decreased by approximately 50 percent. They also were found less likely to suffer another heart attack than people who took placebos.

There are two types of omega-3s you need to know about:

- Icosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA): these are mostly found in fatty fish. You should

aim to eat two servings of fatty fish every week to reap the health benefits.

- Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA): these are found in nuts, such as macadamia (which also has a good balance between omega 3 and omega 6); flaxseed; leafy vegetables; and vegetable oils. ALA is required in the body for energy. It is not easily transformed into EPA and DHA, so you need to ensure you get enough fatty fish in your diet to give you enough of them. If you're vegetarian or vegan, opt for fish oil supplements.

Omega-6s

These fatty acids are also needed by the body and they have various functions, such as improving brain function, hair growth, and bone health as well as aiding your metabolism. You can find most omega-6 fatty acids in vegetable oils. These fatty acids are known as linoleic acid (LA).

One type of omega-6, known as gamma linolenic acid (GLA), fights various health conditions. These include skin issues such as dermatitis and eczema; arthritis; diabetes; and obesity. Unlike other omega-6s, GLA reduces inflammation. Although inflammation is sometimes required by the body, such as the body's response to an injury, you want to keep it in check when you are healthy. You can find GLA in sources such as black currant seed oil and spirulina.

The Risk of Inflammation

Many illnesses are caused by inflammation in the body, such as asthma, arthritis, fibromyalgia, psoriasis, kidney failure and more. If you're wondering why such illnesses seem to have become more common, it's because people tend to eat too many omega-6 fatty acids that contribute to inflammation. There needs to be a balance between omega-6 and omega-3 so the body isn't getting too much omega-6 and it can benefit from the

anti-inflammatory properties of omega-3.

Shockingly, the *ratio of omega-6 to omega-3* (2) in the Western diet is between 10:1 and 25:1! You want to reach a ratio of between 2:1 and 4:1 to ensure that your body is receiving a healthy balance of fatty acids.

Get the Right Omega Balance

It's fine and well to hear that you have to have a balance between omega-3 and omega-6 but how should you do this?

- For starters, it's a good thing to try to eat more omega-3. Try adding fish to your regular diet or supplement with oils rich in omega 3s.
- Then, try to decrease your omega-6 consumption. You can start by getting rid of spreads, such as margarine, and replacing them with olive oil. Stay away from vegetable oils like canola, corn, and soybean.
- Interestingly, you can also find omega-6 in whole-grains and animal products, so you want to decrease how much of these foods you consume.
- Follow the Mediterranean diet as it is high in fruits and vegetables, while including fish and healthy olive oil.

If you're still worried about your ratio, it's a good idea to get your omega fatty acids tested. This will enable you to see exactly what you're dealing with and how to make adequate changes to your diet to reach a healthier ratio.

When you hear that healthy fats are good for you, you might want to add lots of them to your diet but make sure you take a balanced approach. This will help you stay healthy while enjoying delicious meals.

Sources:

- (1) *Omega-3 Fatty Acids: An Essential Contribution* –

Havard, School of Public Health

- *(2) Essential Fatty Acids – Physician’s Committee for Responsible Medicine*
- *Good Fats, Bad Fats: How to Choose – Health*
- *10 Healthy Fats You Should Definitely Include in Your Diet – Term Life Insurance.com*
- *10 Easy Things You Can Do To Improve Your Health Immediately – Organic Lifestyle Magazine*