



**F**at is a necessary part of a healthy eating plan. It supplies your body with energy and essential fatty acids (EFA). Fat from your diet also helps you to absorb vitamins such as A, D, E, and K. Unfortunately, not all fats are created equal. An important key to healthy eating is choosing foods with fats that help protect your heart and reduce your heart disease risk.

## How much fat is recommended?

Research shows that a very low-fat diet is not necessary to protect the heart. Instead, the goal is to eat a moderate amount of healthy fat combined with a fiber-rich, plant-based diet. A moderate amount of fat means no more than 25-35 percent of your total daily calories come from fat. If you are trying to lose weight, keep all fats in moderation as a way to reduce your calorie intake.

Eating foods with lots of saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol can raise the LDL (or bad cholesterol) and triglyceride levels in your blood. Having high levels of LDL and triglycerides puts you at greater risk for heart disease. Trans fats also increase your risk for heart disease because they lower HDL, or good cholesterol. A high level of HDL cholesterol in your blood helps to protect your heart.

## Which fats help to protect my heart?

- Monounsaturated and certain polyunsaturated fats can lower your LDL level. Monounsaturated fats and Omega-3 fatty acids (a type of polyunsaturated fat) can also raise your HDL level.
- Omega-3 fats can protect your heart in other ways. These fats reduce inflammation inside your blood vessels, which slows plaque buildup in the arteries. Omega-3 fatty acids can also lower triglycerides, prevent irregular heartbeats in people with heart disease, improve blood flow, reduce blood clots, and improve blood pressure levels.
- For pregnant and nursing women or women who plan to get pregnant, we recommend eating no more than 6 ounces of fish a week.

- Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) comes mainly from plant sources. The body turns ALA into omega-3 fatty acids. ALA may also help to lower the risk of heart disease.
- Phytosterols (plant stanols and sterols) help lower LDL cholesterol. Tub, liquid, or squeeze margarine products, some cheese, and fruit juices are available with these beneficial compounds.
- Omega-3 supplements and other products may not be appropriate or necessary for you depending upon your current health and risk for heart disease.

Some people may be at high risk for bleeding with large doses of fish oil supplements. Discuss with your health care team whether or not they are recommended for you before you start to use them.

## How do I find foods that will help protect my heart?

Read food labels carefully. Compare the nutrition information of similar food products when you shop. Foods with less than 3 grams of fat in a serving are low-fat. They may be heart healthy options. Aim for food with 0 grams of trans fat per serving. Review the chart on the next page to see foods with fats that can protect your heart and foods with fats to avoid.

## Healthy Fats

Choose in moderation		
High in monounsaturated fats	High in poly-unsaturated ALA fats	High in omega-3 fat*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>olive oil</li> <li>canola oil</li> <li>peanut oil and peanut butter</li> <li>olives</li> <li>avocados</li> <li>almonds</li> <li>pecans</li> <li>macadamia nuts</li> <li>cashews</li> <li>hazelnuts</li> <li>pistachio nuts</li> <li>peanuts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>safflower oil</li> <li>corn oil</li> <li>walnuts</li> <li>soybeans</li> <li>sunflower oil and seeds</li> <li>sesame oil and seeds</li> <li>oils made from seeds</li> <li>brazil nuts (about equal amounts of mono- and polyunsaturated fats)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>salmon</li> <li>sardines</li> <li>mackerel (pacific or jack)</li> <li>herring</li> <li>tuna (canned light)</li> <li>tuna (albacore)</li> <li>pollack</li> <li>trout</li> <li>soybean oil</li> <li>walnuts</li> <li>walnut oil</li> <li>ground flaxseeds</li> <li>flaxseed oil</li> <li>canola oil</li> </ul>

## Harmful Fats

Avoid	
High in saturated fats	High in trans fats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pastries, pies, and bakery items</li> <li>palm oil, palm kernel oil, and coconut oil</li> <li>heavily marbled meats</li> <li>meats high in fat, such as sausage, cold cuts, hot dogs, bacon</li> <li>chicken fat and skin</li> <li>Butter and dairy products with whole milk, such as cheese, cream, whole milk, and ice cream</li> </ul>	<p>Processed foods including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>chips</li> <li>cookies, pastries</li> <li>fried foods</li> <li>fast food</li> <li>crackers</li> <li>stick margarine</li> <li>regular shortening</li> </ul>

\*Most fish and shellfish contain traces of mercury. Large amounts of mercury can cause various health risks, especially during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. Some fish that contain higher levels of mercury include: tuna (mainly albacore), king mackerel, shark, swordfish and tilefish. Try to eat just one serving per week of these fish.

## Tips to help you choose wisely

1. Limit or avoid saturated and trans fat.
2. Choose monounsaturated or omega-3 fats instead. You can:
  - Use small amounts of olive or canola oil for cooking.
  - Use small amounts of nut or seed oils to add flavors to your sautéed vegetables or stir fry.
  - Use olive oil and vinegar as a salad dressing.
  - Sprinkle 1-2 tablespoons nuts or seeds in your salad or pasta.
  - Add a few slices of avocado to your sandwich.
  - Use peanut or another nut butter in your sandwich instead of meat and cheese.
3. Include high omega-3 fish in your diet at least twice a week. If you don't plan to include fish, consider taking an omega-3 supplement each day. Your health care team can guide you on proper and safe omega-3 supplementation.
4. Include ALA fat sources daily. Add walnuts or ground flaxseed to your oatmeal, or add tofu or soy milk to your diet.

## Other resources

- Ask your doctor for a referral to a registered dietitian.
- Check FDA's Seafood Information and Resources website: [www.fda.gov/food/foodsafety/Product-SpecificInformation/Seafood/default.htm](http://www.fda.gov/food/foodsafety/Product-SpecificInformation/Seafood/default.htm)
- Call 1-888-723-3366, CFSAN's toll-free information line.
- For other health education resources please visit [kp.org/healthyliving](http://kp.org/healthyliving).
- Your health, including your ability to maintain healthy eating habits, can be seriously affected by violence or abuse. If you are hit, hurt or threatened by a partner or spouse, there is help. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or connect to [ndvh.org](http://ndvh.org).

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor.