
Nutrition and MyPlate: Oils

Oils are fats that are liquid at room temperature. This includes oils you cook with, plus foods that are mostly oil, such as mayonnaise and salad dressing. Oils are not a food group. But they do provide essential nutrients for your body, such as vitamin E and essential fatty acids, which keep cells and tissues healthy and help the body heal. Most oils are plant-based. They are also high in the healthier unsaturated fats, and low in the less healthy saturated fats.

But some plant oils are high in saturated fats. These include coconut oil, palm oil, and palm kernel oil. These should be consumed less often than other oils. Oils and other fats are also high in calories. Eating too much fat can lead to weight gain and increased risk of heart disease.

Fat facts

Some fats are liquid. Others are solid. Food labels tell you which fats a food contains. Some are healthier than others:

- **Unsaturated fats.** These are often liquid at room temperature. They are found in some oils (such as olive, peanut, and canola), avocado, nuts, seeds, and fish. These are the healthiest fats. They can be good for your heart in moderate amounts. They can even sometimes raise your HDL (good) cholesterol levels.
- **Saturated fats.** These are often solid at room temperature. They are found in animal foods, such as butter, lard, beef, pork, and high-fat dairy. These are less healthy and should be limited. They can raise your LDL (bad) cholesterol levels.
- **Trans fats.** These are found in some fast food, such as french fries, snack foods such as like chips and cookies, and some margarines and shortenings. These are the worst fats for you. Stay away from them when you can. They can raise your LDL cholesterol levels and lower your HDL cholesterol levels.

Be smart about fats

- **Out with the bad.** Check food labels for trans fats. And stay away from foods that have them. Look for the words partially hydrogenated on the ingredients list. Trans fats are mostly found in highly processed foods. So choose less processed, whole foods more often.
 - **In with the good.** Choose unsaturated fat over saturated when you can. Here's one idea: Use olive or canola oil instead of lard or butter. What else could you do?
-
-