



Uncover the Truths About Healthy Fats

Years ago, people had the wrong idea about fat in their diet. Suddenly, fat was viewed as bad, followed by the shift to low-fat products. Unfortunately, this trend didn't make consumers any healthier. In recent years, science and health messages have become clearer. Let's set the record straight on fats, with a focus on the healthy fats.

Fat is essential for health, serving many important functions in the body. Dietary fat provides energy, supports cell growth, and helps absorb other nutrients. It also adds flavor to food and helps keep you feeling full longer. Some fats are better for you than others.

Choose a diet with less saturated fat. Food sources high in saturated fats include animal products like fatty meat, poultry skin, full-fat dairy, butter, and eggs. Eat these foods less often or in small amounts. Read food labels to spot lesser-known saturated fats, such as coconut, palm, and palm kernel oil, found in packaged foods. Too much saturated fat can raise blood LDL "bad" cholesterol levels, increasing the risk for heart disease and stroke.

Plants are key to healthy fats. Unsaturated fat from plant sources like canola, olive, grapeseed, sunflower, and safflower oils are good. Other beneficial foods include avocado, olives, walnuts, almonds, pumpkin, sunflower, and chia seeds. Seafood and fish, especially fatty fish, like salmon, mackerel, sardines, tuna, and oysters, are rich sources of healthy fat.

Healthy fats offer unique benefits. Researchers are exploring the role of unsaturated fats in brain health, supporting mental skills and memory.

Healthy fats are important early in life for brain development and may help guard against age-related decline. Data from studying Mediterranean diets have shown that a diet high in unsaturated fats helps lower LDL "bad" cholesterol and support HDL "good" cholesterol.

Try this healthy fat jump start; it is as easy as 1, 2, 3.

Here's how to add more healthy fats to your diet. Each week, eat:

- 1 avocado.
- 2 servings of fish or seafood.
- 3 handfuls of olives, nuts, or seeds.

U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Accessed Aug. 8, 2025. [dietaryguidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov)

National Institute on Aging. What Do We Know About Diet and Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease? Reviewed Nov. 20, 2023. Accessed Aug. 8, 2025. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-and-dementia/what-do-we-know-about-diet-and-prevention-alzheimers-disease>

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