

Habits for a Healthy Life

Healthy Habit #4

What are Healthy Oils??

By Pepper Carbaugh, RN

So now that you're learning it takes 21 days to develop a healthy habit, let's talk about fats and oils.

Here's some *great* news. Not all fats are bad for your health. Some fats are beneficial to cells in the body; they help with absorption of nutrients, and facilitate nerve transmission.

Some fats may increase your HDL (good cholesterol). This is important because HDL assists with the removal of cholesterol and saturated fats. On the other hand, if too much of the wrong fats are eaten, the risks of heart disease and certain types of cancer increase. It's best to learn about the types of fats and replace the "bad" fats with better choices.

The American Heart Association recommends that our *daily* fat intake make up no more than 20-25 percent of our total daily calories. Example: A person eating 2000 calories daily should have no more than 500 calories from fat. Reading the nutrition label can help you look at your calories consumed from fat. The label can also tell you the types of fat within the product. Below are the types of fat to focus on, and their risks/ benefits.

Saturated Fat- Daily intake should be consumed in *very small* amounts. This is the main dietary cause of high blood cholesterol. It is mostly found in foods from animals such as beef, veal, lamb, pork, lard, poultry fat, butter, cream, milk, cheeses, and other dairy products made from whole and 2% milk. Saturated Fat is also found in some plants such as coconuts, coconut oil, palm oil, and palm kernel oil. Too much saturated fat can lead to coronary artery disease, increasing your risk of a heart attack or stroke.

Trans Fat- Intake of trans fats should be *rare*. Trans fats are liquid oils that have been hydrogenated to provide products with longer shelf lives. Be very careful to read nutrition labels. Avoid processed foods made with partially hydrogenated or hydrogenated vegetable oils. Trans fats can be even more dangerous to your health as saturated fats. A diet including trans fats will increase your risk of clogged arteries, and may even decrease your HDL (good cholesterol).

Unsaturated fats- include polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. This is where the bulk of your daily fat *should* come from. Polyunsaturated fats may help to lower your

blood cholesterol level when used in place of saturated and trans fats. They are mainly found in fish including salmon, trout, and herring. They can also be found in nuts such as almonds, pistachios, and walnuts. Oils from plants, primarily olive and canola oils, are a better choice for cooking. Monounsaturated fats include Omega

3 fatty acids. They assist in increasing HDL and decreasing total cholesterol and LDL levels. They have also been shown to assist with weight loss and a decrease in body fat.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- For an easy start, you can replace butter, lard and other saturated oils with heart smart oils such as olive or canola oil.

-When preparing foods, it's always better to bake, steam or broil foods rather than fry them.

-Replace mayonnaise and solid salad dressings with olive oil and vinegar or vinaigrette dressings. You can also get some healthy fats by adding sunflower seeds or almond slivers on top of your salad instead of bacon bits or croutons, which are higher in saturated fats and have no nutritional value.

-Instead of whole or 2% milk products, use skim and 1%. Pay attention to your portion size with cheese. A 1 ounce serving of cheese will be the same size as approximately 4 dice.

-Eat more poultry, fish and veal as opposed to beef, pork, or lamb. A 3 ounce size of meat is the size of a deck of cards. This is the recommended portion for a meal.

-When hungry for a snack, reach for whole grain products or fruits and vegetables instead of processed foods which contain saturated fats and hydrogenated oils. Snacks make a great time to eat nuts and increase your monounsaturated fat intake.

Talk to your healthcare provider to see if you should have routine lab work done to look at your cholesterol panel. This will provide a much better picture of your health and allow you and your provider to discuss a plan of care. Take a good look at your fat intake and plan to devote 21 days to increasing your heart healthy oils and decreasing your saturated and trans fats. Your heart will thank you for it.

Email us with your questions and progress at MAC4wellness@gmail.com



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