



Smart Fats

Fats are a very important component of the diet and the type of fat in the diet may be more important than the total fat consumed.

Why you need good fats everyday:

- Good fats provide your body with two essential must have
- Good fats speed up your metabolism
- Good fats facilitate fat burning
- Good fats are essential for a strong immune system
- Good fats are essential for maximum brain function and protection from strokes
- Good fats slow gastric emptying and make carbohydrates time release (which helps stabilize blood sugar levels)

Good, healthy fats and oils do not oxidize swiftly or at least, are eaten before they can become oxidized (either in whole foods or as oils). To receive the benefits of these good fats and oils you must consume optimal amounts and the right balance of these essential fatty acids.

Essential fatty acid means that our bodies cannot make the substance and must get it from the diet. In the world of fatty acids, two are considered essential. They are called Alpha-Linolenic (ALA) an Omega-3 fatty acid and Linoleic (LA) an Omega-6 fatty acid. The human body is unable to make linoleic acid from alpha-linolenic acid and vice versa. Therefore, we must have them both.

Fatty acids are often identified by their 'family' name; within the family are different classes of fatty acids. Linoleic acid is an omega-6 fatty acid that is commonly found in foods such as the oils of sunflower, saffron, corn and sesame. Gammalinoleic acid (GLA), a class of omega-6 fatty acids, can be found from sources like borage oil or primrose oil. Omega-6 fatty acids aid in the inflammation response, which is important in protecting the body tissue and allow the healing process to begin.

Inversely, omega-3 has the opposite effect on the body than omega-6, by reducing inflammation. It reduces inflammation in body tissues like blood, arteries, connective tissue and bone tissue. Increasing intake of omega-3 fatty acids has health benefits because it balances out the action of omega-6, but both must work together in order to maintain health.

In the 1970's scientists discovered the health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids while studying the habits and lifestyle of the Eskimo people of Greenland. Researchers found this population had remarkably fewer incidences of certain diseases, such as coronary heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes mellitus and psoriasis, even though they found these people consumed a very high fat diet.

Eicosapentaenoic acids (EPA) & Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) are primarily found in oily cold water fish and seaweed and are key health promoting fatty acids in the omega-3 fatty acid family. Another member of the family is Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) are found primarily in dark leafy vegetables, oils of flax, walnuts and certain vegetable oils. Alpha-linolenic acids do not have the same effect on the body as EPA & DHA; however the body can create them from ALA.

Keep in mind; balance among the essential fatty acids is vital for long term health.

Obtaining Quality Oils

- Attempt to get your oils from whole foods where possible. This means consuming fish, walnuts, flax seed meal, sesame seeds, or other products rather than just consuming the oil.
- Use oils that are certified organic. Organic products do not contain chemicals commonly applied in the growing process and have a greater nutrient density than non-organic.
- Use oils stored in dark bottles. Essential fatty acids are subject to rancidity when exposed to light.
- Oils with a high content of unsaturated fatty acids spoil more easily with increasing air exposure. Oils should be kept covered.
- Oils with high saturated fatty acids spoil more easily when exposed to warm temperatures. Keep them refrigerated at all times.
- Use oils that are unrefined; oils processed this way are most closely related to the original product and are least likely to contain damaged fatty acids.
- Oils should be cold-processed, expeller pressed (look on the label for this statement)
- If you taste an oil that seems bitter, it probably has become rancid. Consuming these oils should be avoided.

Cooking with Oils: The Wet Sauté Method

Cooking with high temperatures is how many oils are damaged. One way to avoid this is to primarily cook with oils that contain mostly saturated fats such as coconut, ghee, or butter. Oils containing mostly monosaturates such as olive oil are also fine for cooking. However, the taste of many other oils; such as sesame are delightful.

One way to preserve the integrity of the oil while still enjoying their taste, is to 'wet sauté'. In this method, place a small amount of water in the pan or skillet and heat just below boiling. Add the food you desire and sauté. As the food becomes cooked, add a small amount of oil. This shortens the time the oil is in contact with the heat, yet preserves the flavor in the food. Oils should not be heated to the point of smoking.

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