

Healthy Fats

There is much controversy regarding dietary fats, including which types we should consume for optimal health. No wonder - not all fats are created equally.

Certainly, most of us are aware that saturated fats should be eaten in moderation and trans fats should be avoided completely. Yet, these cautions can be misleading.

For instance, coconut oil has recently emerged as a saturated fat that is good for us. Unlike other fats, it is a quick source of energy instead of being stored as a fat. Studies have shown that olive oil, a monounsaturated fatty acid, offers protection against heart disease.

Both olive and coconut oils can withstand higher cooking temperatures than seed oils. To minimize the amount of fat that food absorbs during cooking, ensure that these oils are heated before adding food to the pan. Always choose high quality oils like extra virgin olive oil or virgin coconut oil.

Heat, oxygen and light are the enemies of unsaturated fats. However, most oils are produced using heat or chemical extraction processes. Cold pressed on the label indicates that extraction is done without using heat or chemicals.

Essential fatty acids (EFA's) are polyunsaturated fats that we need to get from our diets. Sunflower and sesame seed oils are examples of Omega 6 fats, while fish and flax are good sources of Omega 3. For maximum health benefits, these need to be consumed in a 3:1 (Omega 6:Omega 3) ratio. Hemp oil is closer than other oils to the ideal ratio. These types of oils are best used unheated in salads and other dishes.

So there is no need to be afraid of dietary fat. Simply make informed choices and eat moderate quantities of fats that can actually help you be healthier.

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