

# **PLANET ORGANIC**

## **FATS – the Good and the Bad**

For years many of us have thought that fats are bad for us and make us put on weight. That is certainly true about some unhealthy fats that clog our arteries and build up fat on our hips and stomachs because they cannot be processed by the liver, but it isn't true about all fats. Some of them are imperative for good health, including fish oils and other essential fats that have been given so much publicity in recent years.

### **There are three types of fats:**

1. Hydrogenated fats – artificially made and very unhealthy
2. Saturated fats – a diet rich in these leads to serious health problems but a moderate amount is fine and they are better for cooking than unsaturated fats.
3. Unsaturated fats – includes monounsaturated fats and essential fats (such as fish oils) which are good for you.

To clear up the confusion we have outlined below all the different types, starting with the healthiest fats of all – essential fats.

## **GOOD FATS**

### **Essential Fats – Omega 3s and 6s**

The healthiest fats you can eat

The reason that Omega 3s and 6s are called 'essential' fats is that they are as important to our health as other nutrients – vitamins, minerals, amino acids, protein, carbohydrates, and electrolytes, trace elements. They are essential for life as they are involved in the proper functioning of cells, tissues and organs and significantly they cannot be produced by the body.

**Omega 3s:** In the past few years the press has been full of the benefits of fish oils – which contain Omega 3s, also known as essential fatty acids. There are many health benefits of Omega 3s including:

- healthy brain development and function
- improved concentration and memory
- keeping joints mobile
- clearing up dry skin
- protecting the heart
- stimulating metabolism
- boosting the immune system

Many people simply refer to them as fish oils but Omega 3s are in other foods too:

- oily fish – such as mackerel, salmon, tuna, sardines, herrings
- flaxseed oil (linseeds)
- hemp seed/oil
- pumpkin seeds

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It is Omega 3s that many people are deficient in and trials have shown that school children who take fish oil supplements daily show improved concentration and in some cases of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) have started to behave much better.

**Omega 6s:** The other kind of essential fats that are good for our health are Omega 6s. We do get more of these through our diet than Omega 3s but many people are still deficient in them.

Foods that are good sources of Omega 6s:

- evening primrose oil
- sesame oil
- pumpkin oil
- hemp oil
- wheat germ oil
- walnuts

How to ensure you get your essential fats

There are a number of seed mixes now available that are great for adding to cereal, muesli and salads. Eating oily fish a couple of times a week is excellent - or you can take fish oil supplements which are often combined with plant oils (vegetarians can supplement with flaxseed oil supplements and other plant combinations). We believe that it's best to eat the right foods, but supplementation can help too.

### Monounsaturated Fats

Moderation is the key

Monounsaturated fats, also known as Omega 9s, are beneficial to health when they are eaten in moderation. Unlike saturated fats they can actually help to reduce the risk of heart disease and this is why a Mediterranean diet that is abundant in olive oil is considered healthy.

- avocado
- olive oil
- nuts – macadamia and Brazil nuts are very high in calories
- seeds

While not harmful to health they are fattening. Yet the Greeks, Spanish and Italians suffer less from heart disease than we do because their diet is varied and contains plenty of fruit, vegetables, fish and essential fats.

#### How to use oils for maximum value

Types of oil	Cook	Deep Bake	Stir Fry	Fry	Sauté	Sauce	Salad
Canola	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Coconut	X	X	X	X	X		
Corn	X	X					x
Olive	X				X	X	X

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Peanut	X			X	X	X	X
Safflower	X	X					X
Toasted Sesame		X	X	X	X	X	
Sesame		X	X	X	X	X	
Soy	X	X					X
Sunflower	X	X		X	X		
Flax							X

### BAD FATS

#### Hydrogenated fats - why are they bad news?

You'll notice that Planet Organic is proud of the fact that we have never had hydrogenated fats (also known as trans fats) in any of the foods that we sell. Recently many leading food companies have phased them out of their products too.

Hydrogenation converts unsaturated fatty acids into both saturated and trans-fatty acids. The trans fatty acids formed by hydrogenation are *unnatural* and only ever exist in nature at very low levels, much lower than those found in hydrogenated fat. Because of this, we believe that the human body is not equipped to deal with them. They also compete with essential fatty acids (which are good for you) for absorption in the body.

Trans fats also:

- cause significant and serious lowering of HDL (good) cholesterol
- increase levels of LDL (bad) cholesterol
- make the arteries more rigid
- cause major clogging of arteries
- cause insulin resistance
- contribute to or cause type 2 diabetes
- contribute to or cause other serious health problems

What are they in?

Hydrogenation is a way of making liquid vegetable oil hard at room temperature. The oil is heated up to 210°C under high pressure for up to eight hours while hydrogen gas is injected. Small particles of nickel or copper are added. This destroys the essential fatty acids (needed for many important functions in the body) in the oil and replaces them with deformed trans fatty acids.

Cheap processed foods such as pies, chips, crisps, salad dressings, chocolate, gravy mixes, biscuits, cakes, margarine and other spreads, ice cream, pre-packaged foods, and fast food such as burgers are most likely to contain them.

Processors use hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fat because it is cheap, easy to work with and extends the life of processed foods. It is listed on food labels as hydrogenated fat, partially hydrogenated fat (trans fats), vegetable fat and oils, vegetable margarine or vegetable shortening.

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## **Saturated fats**

Most people are aware of what fatty foods are and that a good fry-up is something to be indulged only on special occasions.

However, this doesn't mean that people don't eat them or shouldn't ever eat them. If you do a lot of exercise and burn off calories you can get away with eating more than someone who does little to no exercise.

Some saturated fats:

- butter
- hard cheese
- cream
- full cream milk
- meat
- burgers
- pies
- chips
- crisps

They should be kept to a minimum in the diet.