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**Community Dining**  
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## Are All Fats Bad?

The short answer is no, not all fats are bad, there are such things as healthy fats (unsaturated fats) and there are bad fats (saturated and trans fats). Fats are one of the three main fuel sources for the body, with the other two being protein and carbohydrates. However, fats are much more calorie dense than protein and carbs, with fat offering 9 calories per gram and carbs and protein offering 4 calories per gram. So, while fats are a necessary and play a crucial role in our diets and health, we do not need to eat as much to fuel our bodies compared to carbs and proteins.

## What are Saturated Fats?

Saturated fats are typically the fat you find in animals. Saturated fats are often solid at room temperature like, butter, lard, and marbling in raw meat. There are two exceptions to this rule; **coconut oil** and **palm kernel oil**. These two oils are plant-based and liquid at room temperature, but are very high in saturated fat! Saturated fats are mostly found in high fat animal foods, like fatty cuts of meat, poultry skin, whole milk, cheese.

## What are Trans Fats?

Trans fats are plant based fats, like vegetable oil, that are turned into a solid spreadable fat, i.e. margarine. These fats used to be found in ingredients under the name hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil. However, trans fats were banned in the US because of the detrimental effects these fats had on our health. So now, when you purchase margarine at the store, you no longer have to worry about trans fats being present. Both trans fats and saturated fats are unhealthy fats and should be limited because they increase cholesterol and triglyceride levels. This increases your risk for heart attack and stroke.

## What are Unsaturated Fats?

Unsaturated fats are healthy fats, they do not increase your cholesterol or triglyceride levels in your blood. There is some evidence that suggests omega-3 fats, a type of unsaturated fat, can actually help reduce your cholesterol and triglyceride levels. Unsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature and are plant-based. There are two types of these fats: monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats.

### Sources of monounsaturated fats

- Avocados
- Olives
- Nuts and nut butters
- Olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil, sunflower oil

### Sources of polyunsaturated fats

- Soybean oil, corn oil, safflower oil
- Fatty fish
- Walnuts, sunflower seeds

### Sources of Omega-3 fats

- Herring, salmon, sardines, trout, mackerel
- Flaxseeds, chia seeds
- Edamame, walnuts
- Flaxseed oil, walnut oil, canola oil

In order to get omega-3 fats in our diets, it is recommended that we eat two servings of fatty fish a week. Fatty fish contains two very important omega-3 fats, EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), both of which our bodies cannot produce and need from food.

We can get omega-3 fats from other sources that are not fish, like walnuts and flaxseeds. Their primary omega-3 fat is ALA (alpha-linolenic acid), which the body can convert into EPA and DHA. However, some research suggests that only 1% of ALA consumed is effectively converted into EPA and DHA. For this reason, it is important to include both fatty fish and nuts and seeds in your diet.

## Tips for Choosing Healthy Fats

- Snack on unsalted nuts and sunflower seeds. Pre-portion a bag of nuts if you are going to be running around all day. These don't need to be refrigerated so they make a great snack if you are on the go.
- Make the switch to vegetable oils from butter when cooking.
- Instead of using mayo on a sandwich, try mashed avocado or hummus!
- Try different nut butters (cashew, almond, sunflower seed).
- Plan two days a week when you will cook or order fish for dinner. Making a plan means you more likely to stick to your goal!
- Add ground flaxseed or crushed walnuts to baked goods, cereals and salads
- Add chia seeds or flaxseeds to your yogurt, cereal or salad. You can also add these whole seeds when making baked goods.

