

**Q.** There are so many kinds of fat. What's an easy way to tell a healthy fat from a bad fat?

**A.** It's true that not all fat is bad for you. In fact, some fats are required for life. They are called **essential fatty acids**, namely linoleic and linolenic. You have to have them in your diet to be healthy and live. They are only found in non-hydrogenated vegetable oils.

This gives us a good clue to easily determine the quality of any fat. If it comes from a vegetable source, is an oil or liquid at room temperature, and has not been altered by hydrogenation (a chemical process that turns a vegetable oil into a solid or partially solid fat) it is a healthy fat and has health benefits such as lowering your risk of heart disease and diabetes. Other healthy fats are those plant based foods that are high in unsaturated fat including:

- ✓ Nuts and seeds
- ✓ Non-hydrogenated nut butters
- ✓ Olives
- ✓ Avocado
- ✓ Hummus
- ✓ Tahini
- ✓ Olive, soy, canola, corn, and safflower oil
- ✓ Most salad dressings (made from vegetable oils).

These foods should be part of your healthy diet, but they should also be eaten in moderate amounts because they are high in calories. Aim to eat a healthy fat at every meal for best health.

## HEALTHY FATS



On the other hand, most fats from most animal sources and fats that are solid at room temperature are mostly saturated.

They don't contain the essential fatty acids, and they actually raise your risk of heart disease and diabetes.

Examples of unhealthy fats include butter, lard, beef fat, and hydrogenated vegetable oils (e.g., hard stick margarine, shortening, most deep-fat frying fats, and foods made from these fats including most fried foods, French

fries, pastry, cookies, cake, pie crust, and most candies with added fat.) The most commonly consumed saturated fat comes from animal foods, especially red

meats, hamburgers, hot dogs, bacon, fried chicken, the skin of poultry, cream, ice cream, and cheese. These are favorite foods of Americans, but for best health, you should limit how often you eat them – and keep serving sizes small when you do!

It's also good to know that fish contains a healthy fat. Fish oils, especially the cold water fish like herring and salmon, are rich in the essential fatty acids plus two others (omega 3 fatty acids) that are very protective against heart disease, are beneficial to the nervous system and have anti-inflammatory properties. Studies show that people who eat fish or fish oils have less heart disease and live longer lives. Japan has a high fish intake, and has the longest longevity of any nation in the world. If you eat meat, fish is a healthier choice than red meats.

Make it your goal to eliminate or at least limit unhealthy fats in your diet. Instead, eat healthy fats in moderation to protect your health.

