

# Is there really a FANTASTIC fat?



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If you want to improve your health there are all sorts of things you can do, but a great place to start is to take a look at your diet – not just how much you eat, but the quality of the things you are eating.

Many people think that all fat is evil but nothing could be further from the truth.

There are fats we should look for and fats we should avoid. Steer clear of trans fat (red light), limit your saturated fat (yellow light) and hop in the fast lane when it comes to mono- and polyunsaturated fat (green light). The mono-unsaturated fats include olive oil (remember that oil is just a liquid fat), macadamia nuts, along with pecans and almonds. These fats are heart healthy and can be a great source of sustained energy, which means you won't get hungry as quickly.

The healthiest of all fats, though, are the polyunsaturated fats. These are the fats you get in fish, walnuts, flax seed and canola oil. Polyunsaturated fats are known as “essential” fats because the body cannot make them – we need to consume them. There are two primary types of the polyunsaturated fats (also known as fatty-acids): omega-3 and omega-6.

Omega-3 fats help blood flow, and the omega-6 fats help blood clot. We should consume a healthy balance of both omega-3 and omega-6 fats. The problem, though, is that the typical American consumes far more omega-6 than they do omega-3. The reason is that man-made, highly processed foods often contain very high levels of omega-6...think of the

“seed” oils like vegetable oil, corn oil, cottonseed oil, etc. Instead of a healthy balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fats, it's believed most of us consume 10 to 20 times more omega-6 than omega-3!

When it comes to the omega-3 fats, there are really two sources: marine (fish) and plant (canola oil, walnuts, flax). The plant sources contain “short chain” omega-3s which are abbreviated ALA. ALA is good, but it is not considered to be nearly as healthy as the “long chain” omega-3s you find in fish. The long-chain omega-3s are abbreviated EPA and DHA.

There are now thousands of studies showing the healthy benefits of the long-chain omega-3s, especially for the heart, the eyes, the immune system and the brain. They also appear to reduce the pain of rheumatoid arthritis and can help with depression, ADHD and Alzheimer's disease.

Dr. William Harris, director of metabolism and nutrition research at Sanford Research in Sioux Falls, SD, says there is no nutrient more important for decreasing risk of cardiovascular death – and more lacking – than omega-3.

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