



5 Food Fats to Know for Heart Health

1. **Omega 6 Fats:** This type of fat is found in corn oil and soybean oil and the amount we use has increased over the years because we eat more processed foods. Go check a few boxed foods in your kitchen cupboard and you will likely find soybean oil in the ingredient list. Too much omega-6 fat can increase inflammation.
2. **Omega 3 Fats:** There are 3 omega-3 fats – DHA, EPA and ALA. The first two are found in fatty fish such as tuna, salmon, trout, mackerel, and herring. ALA is the plant source of omega-3 and is found in flax seed and walnuts. Omega-3 fats help reduce inflammation. If you can eat fish high in omega 3 twice a week you can get a good base amount for heart health. If you don't like fish then you can take fish oil capsules. Remember to read the dosage directions on your supplement bottle. If your doctor recommends 1000mg or 1gram fish oil daily, that actually means 1000mg EPA/DHA. What you need to do is add the EPA and DHA amounts. Most bottles have about 300mg of these once you add them together so that means you need 3-4 pills to get 1000mg of omega-3. You also want to buy a brand you feel has good quality. Since supplements are not regulated you have no guarantee what is actually in the bottle. Flax seed is a grain and can be purchased as seed or milled. You need to eat the ground form to get the health benefits because the body can not break down the seed form. Once it is ground be sure to keep it refrigerated. Add 1-2 tablespoons to cereal, yogurt, or any dish you are having. You will get the benefit of the omega-3 and the fiber!
3. **Monounsaturated fats** are also anti-inflammatory and good for our heart and cholesterol. The Mediterranean Diet is high in monounsaturated fats and includes regular intake of foods like olive oil, canola oil, avocados and

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nuts. Eating these good fats can lower blood pressure, cholesterol and reduce risk for diabetes.

4. **Trans fats** are not good for our health. Some trans fats are naturally found in animal foods but most of our excess trans fats are from processed fat in packaged foods. Stick margarine is the classic example of trans fats. When stick margarine is made, oil is processed to become solid. This process is called hydrogenation and you will often see the words “partially hydrogenated” on ingredient labels. The chemical process of making oil turn solid creates trans fats which have been found to raise artery clogging cholesterol (LDL) and lower artery cleaning cholesterol (HDL). Trans fat amounts are required to be on labels by FDA and you want to try to keep your intake as close to zero as possible. The simplest way to keep trans fat intake low is to eat less processed food.
5. **Saturated fats** can also raise cholesterol. Just think of saturated fat as solid fat like lard or butter. Whole and 2% milk, cheese and fatty meats are also high in saturated fat. Some snack foods and bakery products are high in saturated fats as well. Check the labels and try to keep saturated fat less than 20 grams daily. You do not need to quit eating cheese and eggs. My recommendation is to choose small portions of less processed cheese. I personally don't like fat-free cheese for the taste or texture. Eggs have a little saturated fat but are also a very good protein source. They have gotten a bad reputation over the years due to their higher cholesterol content. Reducing processed foods will do much more for your health than cutting out the eggs.