

# Time for an Oil Change

By Donna Gleeson, MOEd, RD, LD

The Elliot Center for Advanced Nutrition Therapy, Live Better Institute

Are you struggling with excess weight that doesn't want to go away, muscle or joint pain, dry skin, depression or anxiety, high blood pressure or cholesterol, or rising blood sugar levels? Have you tried carefully limiting dietary fat and increased physical activity, but seen no results?

If so, it could be the balance of fats in your diet getting in the way of a healthier you. The American diet has undergone radical changes in the past 50 years. There has been a significant decline in health-promoting omega-3 fat and a huge increase in omega-6 and trans fats. It turns out that omega-3 (good) is anti-inflammatory while omega-6 and trans fats (bad) promote inflammation in our bodies.

Even more disturbing is the fact that these bad fats also interfere with your body's ability to burn stored fat. Omega-3 and monounsaturated fats actually promote the use of fat stores for energy. So, what foods provide these different types of dietary fat?

Trans fats are typically manufactured from omega-6 oils that include soy, cottonseed, sunflower, safflower, and corn. It is a process that involves high heat, pressure, and chemical solvents and the end result is a fat that is solid at room temperature. It becomes a very stable fat that increases the shelf life of products, but this man-made fat disrupts function in the human body because we have no means of breaking it down and using it. In the end, it raises cholesterol, blood sugar, and weight and promotes depression, hyperactivity, and pain.

Conversely, omega-3 oils are highly perishable and so have been removed from most foods. The relatively few food sources of omega-3 include fatty fish, eggs from chickens that have been fed omega-3, flax seeds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, and green leafy vegetables.


Monounsaturated fats are found in olive and canola oils, avocados, natural peanut butter, and many nuts and seeds. Many of these healthy foods are part of the Mediterranean way of life that has been shown to reduce cardiovascular risk factors and promote health.

In 2006, the government began requiring food manufacturers to list trans fat on the nutrition facts label because they recognized the health risks to the public. No surprise, a loophole was created. As long as a single serving of the product has less than half a gram of trans fat, the product can be said to be "trans fat free." Many serving sizes were reduced to be able to put a zero next to trans fat on the label, but the impact on human health did not change.

Several major cities have initiated bans on trans fat in restaurant foods. Fast foods have long been a major source of this unhealthy fat along with baked and fried foods available in grocery stores. There are a few simple rules that will help you avoid the dangers and make healthier choices including:

- Always read the ingredient list on processed foods you buy in the grocery store and put the product back on the shelf if you find the word "hydrogenated"
- Ask at restaurants what fats are used when preparing the food you intend to eat (including salad dressings)
- Choose more whole, unprocessed foods in your eating plan
- Include grass-fed animal products if at all possible

Choosing unhealthy fats is similar to putting a low grade of fuel or motor oil in your car. Why not consider making an oil change yourself and begin eating more health-promoting foods?

To learn more about healthy foods, call the Live Better Institute at 663-4LBI (4524) and schedule an appointment with a registered dietitian. 



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