



Cut overall fats, then boost healthful ones

I can never remember what types of fat are the healthful kinds. What kinds of fats should I be looking for?

The healthful kinds of fats are called monounsaturated and polyunsaturated (as opposed to saturated and trans fats, which we should reduce or avoid as much as we can). But you are definitely not alone in your confusion.

A recent Food and Health survey by the International Food Information Council Foundation found that 72 percent of Americans are concerned about both the amount and the type of fats in their diet. In all, 70 percent said they were trying to decrease their consumption of saturated fat, and 75 percent said they were trying to decrease their consumption of trans fat. So, it seems like most people have gotten the message about those fats.

But at the same time, only 10 percent of the respondents said they were trying to increase monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats in their diets. Moreover, 38 percent said they were trying to decrease monounsaturated fats, and 42 percent said they were trying to decrease polyunsaturated fats.

Nutrition experts generally recommend that although most Americans should decrease fat overall in the diet, we should find ways to use oils high in mono- and polyunsaturated fats in place of items that are high in saturated and trans fats.

To get more healthful fats in your diet, try cooking not with butter or margarine but with oils that are liquid at room temperature, especially olive, canola, safflower, sunflower, soybean and corn oils.

In addition, fatty types of fish, such as salmon and trout, have healthful fats, and nutritionists recommend them for meals at least once or twice a week. For snacks, choose small handfuls of nuts and seeds to munch on instead of chips or crackers. Another idea: instead of putting mayonnaise or cheese on your sandwich, mash up some avocado and use it as a spread. You'll be replacing saturated fats with much more healthful ones.

Just remember, though, that all fats have 9 calories per gram, compared with 4 calories per gram in carbohydrates and protein. And, to be honest, most people simply get too many fats in their diet, period. So, be sure not to go overboard on any type of high-fat foods, whether they're healthful fats or not.

For more information on the Food and Health survey, see the IFIC's Web site at <http://www.ific.org>. For more information on good and bad fats, a good source of information is the Mayo Clinic's Web site at <http://www.mayoclinic.com>. Do a search for "dietary fats."

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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