

# Monounsaturated and Polyunsaturated Fats

## What Are They

Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are found in higher proportions in **plants** and **seafood** and are usually **liquid at room temperature as oils**. The exceptions are certain tropical plant oils, such as coconut oil, palm oil, and palm kernel oil (which are high in saturated fat) and partially hydrogenated oils (a source of artificial *trans* fat).

## Where They Are Found

Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are found in a variety of foods, including:

### Monounsaturated fats

- Avocados
- Mayonnaise and oil-based salad dressings
- Nuts (such as almonds, hazelnuts, peanuts, and pecans)
- Olives
- Seeds (such as pumpkin and sesame seeds)
- Soft margarine (liquid, spray, and tub)
- Vegetable oils (such as canola, olive, peanut, and safflower oils)

### Polyunsaturated fats

- Fish (such as herring, mackerel, salmon, trout, and tuna)
- Mayonnaise and oil-based salad dressings
- Nuts (such as pine nuts and walnuts)
- Seeds (such as flax, pumpkin, sesame, and sunflower seeds)
- Soft margarine (liquid, spray, and tub)
- Vegetable oils (such as corn, cottonseed, soybean, and sunflower oils)

## What They Do

- Like all fats, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats provide calories or “energy” for the body, help the body absorb certain vitamins, and support many body processes.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
4 servings per container	
<b>Serving size 1 1/2 cup (208g)</b>	
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 4g	<b>5%</b>
Saturated Fat 1.5g	<b>8%</b>
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
Polyunsaturated Fat 1.5g	
Monounsaturated Fat 1g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 5mg	<b>2%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 430mg	<b>19%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 46g	<b>17%</b>
Dietary Fiber 7g	<b>25%</b>
Total Sugars 4g	
Includes 2g Added Sugars	<b>4%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 11g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 6mg	35%
Potassium 240mg	6%

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.



## Health Facts

- There is evidence that diets in which unsaturated fats (especially polyunsaturated fats) are eaten in place of saturated fat and within the recommended daily limits for calories are associated with reduced blood levels of total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein (LDL or “bad”) cholesterol—which, in turn, are associated with a **reduced risk of developing cardiovascular disease**. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in both men and women in the U.S.
- The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend that individuals 2 years of age and older limit saturated fat intake to **less than 10% of calories per day** by replacing saturated fat with unsaturated fats, particularly polyunsaturated fats.

## ✔ Action Steps

### For Monitoring Monounsaturated and Polyunsaturated Fats in Your Diet

Use the **Nutrition Facts** label as a tool for monitoring monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Food manufacturers may *voluntarily* list the amount in grams (g) per serving of monounsaturated fat and polyunsaturated fat on the Nutrition Facts label (under Total Fat), but they are *required* to list monounsaturated fat and polyunsaturated fat if a statement is made on the package labeling about the health effects or the amount of monounsaturated fat or polyunsaturated fat (for example, “high” or “low”) contained in the food.

- More often cook and bake with liquid vegetable oils instead of solid fats (such as butter, lard, and shortening).
- Choose oils that are higher in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (such as canola, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean, and sunflower oils) and avoid oils that are higher in saturated fat (such as coconut, palm, and palm kernel oils).
- Switch from stick margarine to soft margarine (liquid, spray, or tub).
- Try seafood and plant sources of protein (such as beans, peas, lentils, tofu, and other soy products) in place of some meats and poultry.
- Sprinkle slivered nuts on salads instead of bacon bits, or snack on a small handful of unsalted nuts or seeds rather than chips or microwave popcorn.
- Instead of creamy salad dressings make your own flavorful dressings with vinegar and oil (such as olive oil).
- Use avocado, nuts, or seeds in a dish instead of cheese.
- When eating out, ask which fats are being used to prepare your meal. You can also ask if nutrition information is available to help you make informed choices.