



Cut Back on Omega-6 Fats

I've recently completed a major update on my book [Healthy Fats: Understanding the Omega-3 and Omega-6 Connection, and More](#). The research on fats is fascinating and provides insight into our wellbeing.

Omega-3 and omega-6 fats are both essential – meaning we need to get them from our diet. We used to get nearly equal amounts of these two types of fat but over time the ratio has heavily skewed in the direction of the omega-6 fats. Now we get around 30+ times as many omega-6s as we do omega-3s. This excess is thought to be a major contributor to disease.

Omega-6 fats have an inflammatory effect, which is life-saving when you are injured. But too much, like we get now, contributes to chronic low-grade inflammation.

Omega-3 fats have the opposite effect: they protect us from inflammation. The active forms, EPA and DHA, are found in fish and fish oil. The less efficient form, ALA, is found in plant foods like flaxseed and walnuts.



There is disagreement among the experts about whether it is enough to just get more omega-3s or whether we also need to decrease our intake of omega-6s. The problem is that they compete for the same metabolic pathways, and the body uses omega-6 fats preferentially. This is why I think it does matter and why we need to decrease the amount of omega-6 we consume to regain our health.

Omega-6s are found in most vegetable oils, processed foods and grain fed animals (including fish). This is why I'm always promoting grass fed or naturally fed meats, poultry and fish. They have less total fat, more omega-3 fats and less omega-6s.

Even if you only use extra virgin olive oil to cook with, you still get other vegetable oils in processed foods. In fact, we get far more omega-6s this way than we realize. Soy oil (which has both omega-3 and omega-6 fats) is said to provide 20% of the total calories in the American diet. That's an astounding amount from something we aren't even aware of consuming!

Bottom Line: reduce omega-6 fats by choosing grass-fed or naturally fed animals; using more plant protein and less animal protein; cutting down on packaged foods and avoiding high omega-6 vegetable oils like corn, safflower, sunflower and soy.

Questioning Wheat? Get Tested!

With a noticeable increase in the number of wheat-free or gluten-free products in the store, you may be questioning whether wheat is good for you or not. There is no simple answer, but there are some relevant things you should know.

Intolerance to wheat can come in several forms:

- Wheat allergy: this is uncommon
- Celiac disease: a genetic inability to digest gluten
- Intolerance to wheat or gluten

True allergies usually have sudden and severe effects. In people with celiac disease, gluten damages the intestines (gluten is a fraction of the protein found in wheat, barley and rye). The only treatment is a 100% gluten-free diet.

While only 1% of the population is thought to have celiac, the number of people with the condition has increased 4 times since the 50's! We don't really know why, but some scientists think it is because our environment is less stable (due to toxins, diet, etc) which leads to more genetic variations.

Wheat intolerance is less damaging, and is often just a matter of managing quantity. This is why it is important to know the difference between celiac and wheat intolerance: it is the difference between a strict diet or a more relaxed approach. Continued gluten exposure for people with celiac interferes with nutrient absorption, and increases the risk of other autoimmune diseases and some cancers.

If you think you may not tolerate wheat or gluten – get tested *before* cutting out wheat. The blood test for celiac disease measures levels of antigens that the body produces in response to gluten. This means you need to be eating wheat to get accurate test results.

Recipes for the Month

Beans and Rice and Salsa, Black Bean Salad with Cactus

Stir Fry Zucchini Surprise

www.HealthyHabitsCoach.wordpress.com.



Healthy Fats: Understanding the Omega-3 and Omega-6 Connection and More

If you'd like to learn more about [Healthy Fats](#) and what you can do to improve the balance in your diet, check out my new book. It is easy to read and loaded with helpful information. Available at: www.HealthyHabitsCoach.com

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

Are you ready to stop dieting and looking for a way of eating that is sustainable, enjoyable and healthy?

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