

# Heart Healthy Cooking Oils

**A**dding more plant-based foods in your diet makes sense for a lot of reasons, including the fact that fats found in the plants, such as nuts, seeds, and olives, have mostly unsaturated fats, which is heart healthy. Olive oil, a key component of the heart friendly Mediterranean diet is considered to be one of the healthiest oils to use for cooking.

It is just one of the many plant-based oils that are rich in unsaturated fatty acids, which are liquid at room temperature. If you read social media, including WhatsApp, you may have run across posts claiming that seed oils, such as canola, safflower, and sunflower oils are responsible for a host of health problems, including obesity, diabetes, and even heart disease.

But there is no significant scientific evidence to support these claims.

**SEED OILS** Edible oils derived from plants are commonly known as cooking or vegetable oils. They include seed oils which are extracted from the seeds of different plants, such as canola, corn, sunflower and sunflower oils. Seed oils contain mostly unsaturated fats, which are heart healthy. They have other attributes also.

For example, canola oil has decent source of alpha linolenic acid (ALA), the main vegetarian source of essential omega-3 fatty acids. Like EPA and DHA, which are the omega-3 fats found in fatty fish, ALA has anti-inflammatory and other effect thought to be heart healthy. Canola oil also contains Phytosterols which occur naturally in plants that may help to lower cholesterol

According to some, seed oils also have some unsavory attributes. After seeds are crushed, their oil is extracted with hexane, which is a solvent that is hazardous in gas form, but it evaporates during oil processing, and this leaves limited if any residual hexane in the liquid form. Another concern involves trans fatty acids, which are linked to higher risk of heart disease.

Canola oil along with all other liquid oils sold in the supermarkets, does contain small amount of trans fats . These form during the deodorizing process that gives oil bland,neutral flavor. However, the amount of trans fats for 1 tablespoon serving is so low, the FDA allows these oils to include a “ contains zero trans fats” claims in their labels.

For these reasons, people should consider canola oil is safe and healthy option for cooking. It's also less expensive than olive oil. Some people avoid olive oil because of its reputation for having grassy, fruity or peppery flavor. Most supermarket olive oils have fairly mild flavor and once you heat it up, all the volatile flavor compounds disappear in about 10 minutes.

Some people get a lot of their calories from processed or restaurant prepared foods, including deep fried foods and that's where the real risk lies. Repeated heating the unsaturated oils up to high temperature creates trans fats and other harmful substances.

Restaurants don't change their oil often enough to get rid of those compounds, which likely contributes to the strong link between the frequent fried food consumption and heart disease.

What about coconut oil? Contrary to report in social media, and WhatsApp, coconut always is not considered as a good oil. It largely consists of saturated fat-80 to 90% of the fat in coconut oil is saturated fat., making it solid at room temperature.

American heart association recommends no more than 6% of your total calories from saturated fats, for those at risk of or who already have heart disease. This is about 13 g based on a 2000 cal diet. 1 tablespoon of coconut oil comes close to that limit, with the 12 g of saturated fat.

Many of the health claims for coconut oil are based on studies that used a special formulation of coconut oil made of 100% medium chain triglycerides-MCTs. MCTs are quickly absorbed and metabolism by the body, which is thought to promote a feeling of fullness and prevent fat storage.

However, the coconut oil found on most supermarket shelves contain mostly Lauric acid which is absorbed and Metabolized more slowly than MCTs. As a result, the health benefit reported from specially constructed MCT coconut oil cannot be applied to regular coconut oil. Bottom line is coconut Oil is neither a super food nor a poison. It is OK to use coconut oil in small amounts.

But you can use coconut for your hair as much as you want

Finally, it is OK to enjoy “fun food”,such as french fries and other treats once in a while. The key is to consume seed oils.-and all other sources of fat-in moderation.

Keshava Aithal

HEART TALK NO 24

TO TAKE OR NOT TO TAKE DAILY BABY ASPIRIN.

OK Now you are all done with your Ugadi Celebration, it is time to get back to business. For years, doctors prescribed low-dose aspirin for many patients to prevent cardiovascular disease, including heart attack and stroke. However, aspirin is not harmless. It has bleeding risks.

Even though bleeding risk of low-dose aspirin is low, it can be significant and the risks and the benefit should be weighed against each other.

Until 2018 giving low-dose aspirin to prevent heart disease was a norm.

In 2018, there were three large clinical trials on the use of aspirin for primary prevention.-that is, in people with risk factors for heart disease, but no history of heart attack, stroke, stents or had heart surgery- this revealed while aspirin reduces the incidence of major cardiovascular events, it also increased the risk of hemorrhagic stroke ( Brain Bleed ) which could be devastating.

It also increases gastrointestinal bleeding, resulting in hospitalization, blood transfusion, or even death. These findings lead to the recommendation that most people with risk factor for cardiovascular disease, but no history of heart attack or stroke should avoid taking daily aspirin as a preventative measure.

How does aspirin work? Aspirin helps the heart mainly by preventing blood clots. Aspirin acts by blocking an enzyme called COX-1. This prevents the formation of Thromboxane A<sub>2</sub>, a substance that causes platelets to clump together (Aggregate) and makes platelets less sticky.

With less platelet aggregation, aspirin reduces the risk of blood clot formation in arteries, especially in arteries narrowed by atherosclerosis. Most heart attacks occur when an unstable plaque ruptures and blood clot forms, blocking the blood flow. Aspirin can reduce the likelihood or severity of such an event.

Why would many people continue to take aspirin against doctors advise. That is because - -Individuals think that it is better to be safe than sorry and they take it just in case.

They may think that aspirin, sold over-the-counter and commonly referred to as BABY ASPIRIN and can't be very dangerous. -Their parents or grandparents took it, so they were raised with the concept that daily aspirin is cardio protective

Who should take daily aspirin ? In primary prevention, aspirin has very little role. However, it has a place in secondary prevention., Namely, in individuals who have history of heart attack, stroke, stent or bypass surgery, all people with peripheral vascular disease.

In these people, the benefits of aspirin outweigh risk So, these people should not stop taking aspirin without first discussing with their physicians.

Who else should take aspirin daily? Some cardiologist recommend aspirin for high risk primary prevention patient with low risk of bleeding. Who belong to this category requires clinical judgment. Aspirin is unlikely to be beneficial in primary prevention under the age of 40, since their cardiovascular risk is typically low.

Aspirin is also not advisable for those older than 70 for primary prevention because of their bleeding risk is higher For primary prevention in patients between the ages of 40 and 70, the following factors will help to decide the need for aspirin. -10 year cardiovascular risk event exceeding 10% -Strong family, history of early coronary artery disease, at a young age -Significant elevation of Lipoprotein (a) level -Elevated coronary artery calcium score In these individuals, the benefits of low-dose aspirin in preventing cardiovascular disease exceeds their bleeding risk

Bottom line is that if your doctor recommends you discontinue aspirin, stop taking it. If your doctor advised you to take daily aspirin, never stop it unless discussing this with your health care provider.

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