

# Eat More Omega-3s



**CHALLENGE**  
Add healthy fats  
to your diet

## Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Eat More Omega-3s."
2. To complete the challenge, eat foods with omega-3 fatty acids on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep a record of your completed challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

You're sitting in a restaurant looking over the menu trying to decide what to order. Do you choose the grilled salmon served with steamed broccoli and brown rice? Or do you order the T-bone steak served with mashed potatoes and gravy and a pat of butter? Before you rattle off your order to your server, consider making your decision based on which meal contains healthier fats. The fish or the steak? The leafy greens or the potatoes?

If you need a little help, here's a hint: Not all fats are bad. The salmon dish served with steamed broccoli contains healthy fats known as *omega-3 fatty acids* that your body uses to protect your heart, reduce inflammation, lower triglyceride levels and blood pressure, and keep your brain healthy.

And most people don't get enough omega-3 fatty acids in their diet. This month, give your diet an upgrade and take the challenge to **Eat More Omega-3s**.

## Beware of bad fats

If you were partial to the T-bone steak, too bad. It does not contain healthy fat. Red meat contains saturated fat that increases cholesterol levels and your risk for heart disease. You can see saturated fat around steak, ribs, and other cuts of meat. And you'll even find it under the skin of chicken and poultry. Saturated fats are also found in whole-fat dairy products like butter, cream and whole milk.



### Recommended amount of omega-3 fatty acids

For best health, aim for 500 to 1,000 mg daily of omega-3 fatty acids from food sources, supplements, or a combination of the two.

Another type of fat to avoid is *trans fat*. This type of bad fat is made when vegetable oil is "hydrogenated" and turned into a solid like margarine or shortening. It's found in a wide variety of processed foods. Trans fats have been linked to diabetes, stroke, and heart disease. And the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently proposed a ban on trans fats in all foods.

## Not all fats are the same

If you're trying to eat healthy or lose weight, you might hear someone say, "Eat a low-fat diet." But not all fats are the same. For example, in the Women's Health Initiative Dietary Modification Trial, eating a low-fat diet for eight years did not prevent heart disease, breast cancer, or colon cancer. The low-fat diet didn't do much for weight loss either. What did make a difference was choosing good fats and avoiding bad fats. Eating foods that contain unsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids help lower your risk for heart disease, increase longevity, and provide a variety of other important health benefits.

### Take the Omega-3 Quiz

How much do you know about omega-3 fatty acids? Take this quiz to find out.

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1.   Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish help reduce the risk for heart disease and heart-related deaths.
2.   Some people effectively reduce joint pain caused by arthritis by adding more omega-3 fatty acids to their diet.
3.   Good sources of omega-3 fatty acids include leafy green vegetables, avocados, nuts and seeds, vegetable oils, and fish.
4.   Making sure you get adequate amounts of omega-3 fatty acids in your diet improves brain health and may help prevent Alzheimer's disease and dementia.
5.   You must get omega-3 fatty acids from food sources or supplements.

If you answered "False" to any of these questions, you may benefit from learning more about omega-3 fatty acids. Learning how to include more food rich in omega-3 fatty acids can improve your health.



## How to add more omega-3 fatty acids to your diet

You can easily avoid bad fats and eat more food with healthy fats and omega-3 fatty acids by primarily eating a plant-based diet. Plant-based foods are cholesterol-free, have no animal fats, are high in essential fatty acids, and dietary fiber. You can also add more omega-3 fatty acids to your diet by eating fish and lean meat occasionally. Here are some simple ways you can add more omega-3 fatty acids and other healthy fats to your diet:

- **In place of butter use spreads.**

Try hummus and nut butters, trans-fat-free margarines, and olive oil and garlic.

- **Season with herbs.** Basil, oregano, cloves, marjoram, tarragon, and thyme all contain omega-3 fatty acids.

- **Always use vegetable oils** in place of all-animal fats and solid fats such as shortening for sautéing and cooking.



- **Bake your own treats.** Off-the-shelf cookies, pastries, cake, and crackers contain unhealthy fats. But you can make your own with non-hydrogenated vegetable oil, cut back on calories and sugar, and add more omega-3 fatty acids to your diet.

- **Choose healthier snacks.** Try baked kale chips. Eat broccoli or cauliflower florets. Or have a piece of whole-grain toast with peanut butter. These healthy-fat snack alternatives are much better than potato chips and candy bars.

Not all fats are created equal  
<http://tinyurl.com/mdn8qwg>

- **Go vegan for a day.** Even if you're not a vegetarian, try eating a plant-based diet for at least one day a month. This simple exercise will help you increase the amount of omega-3 fatty acids

and healthy fats you consume. You'll probably eat more fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds, legumes, and whole grains than you normally would.





- **Cook from scratch.** When you order fast food or buy packaged meals, there's a good chance they contain saturated fats or trans fats. But if you cook from scratch using raw foods and spices, you'll get more omega-3s in your diet and avoid unhealthy fats.

- **Choose lean fish and poultry.** If you're not a vegetarian, avoid red meats that contain saturated fats. Instead, choose lean fish and skinless poultry that contain omega-3 fatty acids.

- **Eat low-fat dairy or soy products.** Low-fat dairy or soy-based products like milk and yogurt contain healthy amounts of omega-3 fatty acids. Read food labels for options fortified with omega-3 fatty acids. More food manufacturers are doing this because of the known health benefits.

- **Stock up on nuts, seeds, and avocados.** These plant-based foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids can be eaten as a snack or easily added to salads and other recipes.

8 ways to eat more omega-3s  
<http://tinyurl.com/6mmlx6l>

Best sources for omega-3 fatty acids	
<b>Oils</b>	Canola, soybean, walnut, and flaxseed oils 
<b>Unsalted nuts &amp; seeds</b>	Walnuts, sunflower seeds
<b>Fish</b>	Halibut, salmon, trout, tuna
<b>Whole-grains</b>	Whole-grain breads, cereals, and oatmeal 
<b>Vegetables</b>	Avocados, broccoli, spinach, kale, cauliflower, cabbage 
<b>Legumes</b>	French beans, Navy beans, mung beans 

If you don't regularly eat these foods, consider taking an omega-3 supplement of 500 mg per day. But getting nutrients directly from the foods you eat provides the best results.

- **Consider taking an omega-3 supplement.** If you are a vegetarian, you can get adequate omega-3 fatty acids from plant-based foods. But many choose to take a dietary supplement to ensure they get the protective benefits from this healthy fat. If you're not a vegetarian, but you rarely consume fish or plant sources of omega-3s, you may also want to consider taking a supplement.



You might have to rethink your menu choices or change your shopping habits at the grocery store, but with a little planning, you can add more omega-3 fatty acids to your diet and improve your health.

Harvard School of Public Health.; National Institutes of Health.; U.S. Food and Drug Administration.; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.; American Heart Association.



# Eat More Omega-3s

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### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you eat foods with omega-3 fatty acids.
3. Use the calendar to record the actions and choices you made to make eating more omega-3 fatty acids become a regular part of your life.
4. At the end of the month, total the number of days you ate foods with omega-3 fatty acids. You must do this on at least 22 days this month to complete this challenge. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH: _____							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I ate foods with omega-3 fatty acids

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking or biking

### Other wellness projects completed this month:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

