

## What are “oils”?

---

Oils are fats that are liquid at room temperature, like the vegetable oils used in cooking. Oils come from many different plants and from fish. Some common oils are:

- canola oil
- corn oil
- cottonseed oil
- olive oil
- safflower oil
- soybean oil
- sunflower oil

Some oils are used mainly as flavorings, such as walnut oil and sesame oil. A number of foods are naturally high in oils, like:

- nuts
- olives
- some fish
- avocados

Foods that are mainly oil include mayonnaise, certain salad dressings and soft (tub or squeeze) margarine with no *trans* fats. Check the Nutrition Facts label to find margarines with 0 grams of *trans* fat.

Most oils are high in monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats, and low in saturated fats. Oils from plant sources (vegetable and nut oils) do not contain any cholesterol. In fact, no foods from plants sources contain cholesterol.

A few plant oils, however, including coconut oil and palm kernel oil, are high in saturated fats and for nutritional purposes should be considered to be solid fats.

Solid fats are fats that are solid at room temperature, like butter and shortening. Solid fats come from many animal foods and can be made from vegetable oils through a process called hydrogenation. Some common solid fats are:

- butter
- beef fat (tallow, suet)
- chicken fat
- pork fat (lard)
- stick margarine
- shortening

## How are oils different from solid fats?

---

All fats and oils are a mixture of saturated fatty acids and unsaturated fatty acids. Solid fats contain more **saturated fats** and/or ***trans* fats** than oils. Oils contain more monounsaturated (MUFA) and polyunsaturated (PUFA) fats. Saturated fats, *trans* fats, and cholesterol tend to raise “bad” (LDL) cholesterol levels in the blood, which in turn increases the risk for heart disease. To lower risk for heart disease, cut back on foods containing saturated fats, *trans* fats and cholesterol.

## Why is it important to consume oils?

---

Most of the fats you eat should be polyunsaturated (PUFA) or monounsaturated (MUFA) fats. Oils are the major source of MUFAs and PUFAs in the diet. PUFAs contain some fatty acids that are necessary for health—called “essential fatty acids.”

Because oils contain these essential fatty acids, there is an allowance for oils in the food guide separate from the discretionary calorie allowance.

The MUFAs and PUFAs found in fish, nuts, and vegetable oils do not raise LDL (“bad”) cholesterol levels in the blood. In addition to the essential fatty acids they contain, oils are the major source of vitamin E in typical American diets.



While consuming some oil is needed for health, oils still contain calories. In fact, oils and solid fats both contain about 120 calories per tablespoon. Therefore, the amount of oil consumed needs to be limited to balance total calorie intake. The Nutrition Facts label provides information to help you make smart choices.

## How much is my allowance for oils?

Most Americans consume enough oil in the foods they eat, such as:

- nuts
- fish
- cooking oil
- salad dressings

A person's allowance for oils depends on age, sex, and level of physical activity. Daily allowances are shown in the chart.

<b>Children</b>	2-3 years old	3 teaspoons
	4-8 years old	4 teaspoons
<b>Girls</b>	9-13 years old	5 teaspoons
	14-18 years old	5 teaspoons
<b>Boys</b>	9-13 years old	5 teaspoons
	14-18 years old	6 teaspoons
<b>Women</b>	19-30 years old	6 teaspoons
	31-50 years old	5 teaspoons
	51+ years old	5 teaspoons
<b>Men</b>	19-30 years old	7 teaspoons
	31-50 years old	6 teaspoons
	51+ years old	6 teaspoons

## How do I count the oils I eat?

The chart gives a quick guide to the amount of oils in some common foods:

	Amount of Food	Amount of Oil	Calories from Oil	Total Calories
		Teaspoons /grams	Approximate calories	Approximate calories
<b>Oils:</b>				
Vegetable oils (such as canola, corn, cottonseed, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean, and sunflower)	1 Tbsp	3 tsp/14 g	120	120
<b>Foods rich in oils:</b>				
Margarine, soft ( <i>trans</i> fat free)	1 Tbsp	2½ tsp/11 g	100	100
Mayonnaise	1 Tbsp	2½ tsp/11 g	100	100
Mayonnaise-type salad dressing	1 Tbsp	1 tsp/5 g	45	55
Italian dressing	2 Tbsp	2 tsp/8 g	75	85
Thousand Island dressing	2 Tbsp	2½ tsp/11 g	100	120
Olives, ripe, canned	4 large	½ tsp/ 2 g	15	20
Avocado*	½ med	3 tsp/15 g	130	160
Peanut butter*	2 T	4 tsp/ 16 g	140	190
Peanuts, dry roasted*	1 oz	3 tsp/14 g	120	165
Mixed nuts, dry roasted*	1 oz	3 tsp/15 g	130	170
Cashews, dry roasted*	1 oz	3 tsp/13 g	115	165
Almonds, dry roasted*	1 oz	3 tsp/15 g	130	170
Hazelnuts*	1 oz	4 tsp/18 g	160	185
Sunflower seeds*	1 oz	3 tsp/14 g	120	165

\*Avocados are part of the fruit group, nuts and seeds are part of the meat and beans group.