



## Olive Oil, the Heart-Healthy Choice

A staple of the Mediterranean Diet, olive oil is now commonly known for its ability to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease by controlling the levels of LDL, or bad cholesterol, and raising the levels of HDL, or good cholesterol. However, olive oil's health benefits reach far beyond that and may just convince you that it is time to replace butter, margarine and other oils used in everyday cooking with this flavorful and healthful product.

Benefits range from decreasing the risks of cancer to helping with weight loss, to providing vital vitamins and nutrients for the body. However, to provide a better understanding of olive oil and how it affects the body, a brief background of nutrition is provided.

### Nutritional Background

Eating food should be a pleasurable experience, enjoyed for the taste, texture and the company you are with. However, there are better choices when deciding what to eat.

To get the proper nutrition your body needs a variety of nutrients each day. These nutrients are broken down into five groups, carbohydrates, proteins, fats, minerals and vitamins. Of these, Olive Oil comes under the category of fats, an unfortunately maligned food.

This vital nutrient provides a powerhouse of concentrated energy, contains essential fatty acids required for a healthy body, transports fat-soluble vitamins, provides support, cushioning and insulation for vital organs and cell walls, and finally, it is the body's main supply of energy stores. Another item of vital importance, fat is what gives food its aroma and flavor.

Fatty acids are a major component of fat and come in four forms, monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, saturated and trans fatty acids. Of these, olive oil is an excellent source of the 'good' monounsaturated fatty acids.

**Monounsaturated fatty acid** is the most heart friendly and the healthiest type of fat. It promotes heart health, possibly prevents cancer and may treat other ailments. This fat helps lower LDL (unhealthy/bad) cholesterol and maintains healthy levels of HDL (healthy/good) cholesterol. *Olive oil*, canola oil and avocados are all a rich source of this fatty acid.

**Polyunsaturated fatty acid** is moderately healthy and also lowers LDL. However, it lowers level of HDL as well. It is the predominant fatty acid found in safflower oil, soybean oil and various other vegetable oils.

**Saturated fatty acid** is unhealthy as it increases levels of total cholesterol as well as LDL cholesterol. It is found in most animal products such as *butter*, cheese, cream, and meats as well as tropical oils such as coconut and palm oils.

**Trans fatty acid** is the worst type of fat possible. It is created through a man-made process and the body recognizes it as a saturated fat, which it turns immediately into



cholesterol. This fat disrupts cell membranes which in turn negatively affect nutrient and waste distribution. This fat is found in processed foods such as *margarine*, crackers, cookies, fried foods, snack foods and many other *store-bought baked goods*, as they hold a longer shelf-life.

To gain a better understanding of olive oil, the breakdown of fatty acids is shown as:

74% Monounsaturated (the highest of any other fat product)

8% Polyunsaturated

14% Saturated

4% Other Elements

This is important to note as olive oil is also a good source of essential polyunsaturated fatty acids that our body requires, omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids.

In November 2004, the FDA announced that eating about 2 Tbsps of olive oil daily may reduce the risk of heart disease.\* Olive oil is a recommended replacement for butter or margarine in your daily cooking requirements. By making this small lifestyle change you are making a major change for your health. You get your daily allotment of olive oil and improve your health, all without making a difficult lifestyle change!

### Chart of Olive Oil Replacement

Butter	Olive Oil
1 tsp	3/4 tsp
1 Tbsp	2-1/4 tsp
2 Tbsp	1-1/2 Tbsp
1/4 cup	3 Tbsp
1/3 cup	1/4 cup
1/2 cup	1/4 cup + 2 Tbsp
2/3 cup	1/2 cup
3/4 cup	1/2 cup + 1 Tbsp
1 cup	3/4 cup

### Specific Health Benefits

Olive oil health benefits include improving heart health, decreasing the risk of rheumatoid arthritis, lowering the systolic and diastolic blood pressure, decreasing cancer incidences, and when included as part of the Mediterranean diet, leads to significant decreases in blood pressure, body weight, LDL cholesterol, levels of glucose and insulin while also creating significant increases in HDL cholesterol.

An Italian study published in 2003, noted that while unsaturated fat reduced blood pressure, olive oil was much more likely to reduce blood pressure than other types of oils.



In studies concerning inflammation and chronic inflammation disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis, olive oil has been found to reduce inflammation due to the phytochemicals (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phytochemicals>) prevalent in it, unlike some other fats, which actually antagonize the immune system and create inflammations. Consuming olive oil on a regular basis may help decrease the risk of inflammation related conditions.

Another positive health benefit related to olive oil usage is a reduced chance of cancer, as shown by countries with diets high in olive oil usage, such as Italy, Greece and Spain, which have much lower occurrences of cancer than the United States and areas of northern Europe.

Research into weight loss shows that replacing other types of fats with monounsaturated fats, in particular olive oil, helps with weight loss, even if no additional food restrictions are applied. Other studies have found that olive oil affects food intake in a particular sitting, with subjects eating less when provided bread with olive oil over bread with butter. Olive oil is speculated to provide a more filling and satisfying effect, may possibly be metabolized differently from saturated fats or possibly encourage the breakdown of stored fats, all of which help with weight loss.

Diabetics may also benefit from an increased use of olive oil. Currently, it is recommended that they enjoy a low-fat diet to ensure control over their blood sugar levels, however, new studies are suggesting that diets high in monounsaturated fat (olive oil) are just as effective or possibly even better than a low-fat, low carbohydrate diet.

Olive oil is also highly unlikely to cause an allergic reaction and is actually very well tolerated by the stomach, where it can be used to treat digestion issues, upset stomachs or constipation.

This product is also a rich source of vitamins such as A, B-1, B-2, C, D, E and K, as well as iron and its high antioxidant content means that it is able to slow the aging process of cells and tissues by attacking free radicals.

When taking all the possible benefits of olive oil into consideration, now is the perfect time to make a change to your health for the better. Look at our First Press, Cold Press, honestly genuine [Extra Virgin Olive Oil](#) ([link to purchase page](#)) now. Insist on genuineness and you will feel and taste the difference.

## **The Mediterranean Diet:**

This diet is one that is high in monounsaturated fat from olive oil, while still moderate in calorie intake, and encourages an active lifestyle. Studies show that changing to this diet can lead to dramatic increases in health and general well being. In particular, following this diet decreases the likelihood of heart disease or cancer.



A Mediterranean diet is full of whole grains and vegetables, large quantities of fresh fruit, encourages the use of healthy fats such as olive and canola oil, enjoying fish or shellfish at least twice a week, very rarely having red meat, snacking on nuts, eating low amounts of dairy products and consuming red wine in moderation. In general, the diet is extremely low in saturated and trans fats and full of heart healthy fats.

\*Limited and not conclusive scientific evidence suggests that eating about 2 tbsp. (23 g) of olive oil daily may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease due to the monounsaturated fat in olive oil. To achieve this possible benefit, olive oil is to replace a similar amount of saturated fat and not increase the total number of calories you eat in a day.

Sources:

<http://recipes.howstuffworks.com/the-health-benefits-of-olive-oil-ga.htm>

[http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/nutrition\\_articles.asp?id=123](http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/nutrition_articles.asp?id=123)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive\\_oil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive_oil)

[http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/nutrition\\_articles.asp?id=607](http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/nutrition_articles.asp?id=607)

<http://www.olivehealth.com/>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mediterranean-diet/CL00011>

<http://www.healthcastle.com/mediterranean-diet.shtml>