

Healthy fats **are essential** to our well-being and the proper functioning of our bodies. They are a source of energy, help build healthy cell membranes, and fortify the nervous system, the kidneys, the brain, and muscles. They help stabilize blood sugars and are important in blood clotting. They also help the intestines better digest food and absorb nutrients, help regulate hormones, protect the body from toxins, and lubricate us both inside and out. So healthy fats should not be used sparingly!

Oils can provide us with these fats and are a critical component in a well-balanced, healthy diet. But not all oils are created alike – some oils are better for us than other oils.

Good Cooking Oil Choices

Heating can change the constituents in oils. High heat can actually damage lower heat oils to the point where all of the things in them that are so good for us are burned away. **Any time that an oil gets too hot and begins to smoke, it is an indication that the oil is probably no longer “good”.** Some oils are considered to have higher heat points than others, which means that they remain more stable when heated to higher degrees, and maintain their nutritional values. Examples of recommended healthy cooking oils to use are:

| Temp | Uses | Temp/Oil Type | Smoke Point | Oils/Fats in this Category, lowest to highest heat |
|--------------|--|------------------|---------------|--|
| Up to 510° F | All Purpose Cooking – ideal for sautéing, frying, and other high heat applications | High Heat | 445° - 510° F | Refined Sesame (445° F), Sunflower, Apricot Kernel, Almond, and Avocado (510° F) |
| Up to 425° F | Baking & Sautéing – best for sautéing at medium high heat, or for baking because of their neutral flavors | Medium High Heat | 360° - 425° F | Soy (360° F), Refined Coconut, Walnut, Organic Ghee (clarified butter), and Grapeseed (425° F) |
| Up to 350° F | Light Sautéing & Sauces – these have fuller flavors, making them ideal for sauces and salad dressings, or for light cooking where flavor is important in the finished product | Medium Heat | 260° - 350° F | Unrefined Coconut (260° F), Unrefined Olive, Unrefined Toasted Sesame, Organic Butter, Unrefined Peanut, and Unrefined Sesame (350° F) |

Many of the oils listed above can also be used in their raw, nutritive state as well as being used in cooking. They can be used in dressings, poured directly onto dishes, and can even be used topically as lubricants or emollients to moisturize our bodies.

Regarding refined oils: the list above contains both refined and unrefined oils. Refined oils are processed to neutralize flavor, aroma, and color, and are therefore good choices for cooking when you do not want strong flavors or aromas, and are also used extensively in health/beauty aids for the same reasons. They also are typically used in higher heat cooking. When selecting refined oils, look for oils that have been processed without chemicals and high heat. For example, when looking for a refined coconut oil, try to select products where the oils have been expeller-pressed and are **not** fully or partially hydrogenated. Stay away from any hydrogenated oil, as the process can create trans fats within the oil. Trans fats are unhealthy fats and should be avoided completely.

Use unrefined and organic oils in their raw, nutritive state as much as possible to reap all of the benefits they can provide.

Good Nutrient Oils

Nutrient oils are not meant to be directly heated (they have very low smoke points – only up to 225° F) and are used to nourish and promote growth, provide energy, repair body tissues, and help maintain life. These nutrient oils have robust flavors but fragile structures so they are best poured directly onto a finished dish, can be blended into a dressing or sauce, or can be taken directly as a supplement. These recommended oils in their unrefined states are:

- Borage
- Evening Primrose
- Wheat Germ
- Flax
- Enriched Flax
- Ultra-Enriched Flax

Controversial Oils – Good or Bad?

Some oils, like Olive, we just know to be good for us. Others have had some controversy surrounding their use. Here is information on some of these oils:

- **Coconut oil** – some articles will lead you to believe that coconut oil is an artery-clogging, cholesterol-raising oil that should be avoided – basically, a “bad” oil. However, this wonderful oil is made of medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) which are smaller than other vegetable oil chains and therefore are immediately burned by your liver for energy without an insulin spike. Because it is about 90% saturated fat, it is stable and can be used for higher heat cooking. It is also 50% lauric acid which is antiviral, antifungal, and antibacterial. It can help with heart disease by increasing our “good cholesterol” and boosting our immune systems. There are also studies being done by doctors and researchers into its use to treat Alzheimer’s Disease. And it is great as a skin lubricant and beauty aid!
- **Canola Oil** – Opinions are divided on whether or not this oil is considered “good” or “bad”. Many tout this oil as a healthy, “good” choice, and some recommend staying away from it. Canola oil is not made from a canola – there is no such thing in nature. Rather it is made from the rapeseed, which is a vegetable-like plant in the Mustard or Cabbage family. In the past, rapeseed was used to create an industrial oil – it was very inexpensive to make, and therefore inexpensive to use. In the early 1970s, Canadian scientists wanted to create an edible version of this oil, so they created a version that contained less of the harmful and bitter constituents from the original rapeseed oil. It was named after **Canada** and **Oil Low Acid** (Can-ola). Since 1995, these rapeseed variants have been genetically engineered to be resistant to the herbicide Roundup, making it a Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) product. Besides being a GMO, it contains high levels of erucic acid, which in higher amounts can be damaging to the cardiac muscle in animals.

Resources

- <http://www.livestrong.com/article/267169-why-oils-are-important-in-healthy-diet/>
- http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/Nutrition/Fats-and-Oils_UCM_304495_Article.jsp#.Vr0H-krLIX
- <http://authoritynutrition.com/canola-oil-good-or-bad/>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapeseed>
- <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2009/09/22/7-reasons-to-eat-more-saturated-fat.aspx>
- <http://healthimpactnews.com/2014/what-type-of-coconut-oil-is-best-how-to-choose-a-coconut-oil/>
- *Coconut Oil: The Brain-Healthy Oil with a Bad Reputation*, paper written by Deane Alban (provided to Ohlone Herbal Center by Sarah Bearden)
- Spectrum Organics’ *Kitchen Guide*, smoking points of cooking oils