

3 Healthy Fats That Will Make You Skinny

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Many of us who have struggled with weight over the years were thrilled when all those low-fat and fat-free food products hit the market. But the low-fat era only resulted in the fattening of North America. Although these products were indeed lower in fat, the fats were simply replaced with sugar to make them taste better. (The exceptions to this general rule are low fat cheeses and milk, but non-fat yogurt, unless it is Fage, is still one to steer away from).

We now know fats – healthy fats – are needed for fat loss. They help us feel full and satisfied because of their effects on our appetite-controlling hormones, leptin and CCK. They prevent cravings and actually help us to lose weight when we consume them in the right forms and amounts. Very convincing evidence of this comes from a team of scientists at the Washington University School of Medicine. Their research showed that old fat stored around the belly, thighs or butt cannot be burned off effectively unless we have new fat coming in from our diet or our liver. The findings, published in the May 2005 edition of *Cell Metabolism*, revealed that knocking out the fat-producing enzyme from the liver of mice (i.e., making them unable to produce fats necessary to maintain normal sugar, fat and cholesterol metabolism) caused the mice to develop fatty liver disease, even when they were fed a zero-fat diet!

So here are three fat-rich foods your diet should not be without:

1. A Daily Dose of Extra Virgin Olive Oil: 1 Tbsp

Olive oil has been a vital component in a heart-healthy, Mediterranean-style diet for a very long time. Olives and olive oil are rich in antioxidant compounds called polyphenols, which are known to have anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer and anti-coagulant benefits. Olive oil also provides a rich source of plant sterols to curb inflammation aid, hormonal balance and control cholesterol. Though the various ways olive oil benefits weight loss is possibly the most exciting info I have to share.



Olive oil, in particular, has been shown to improve our sensitivity to insulin. In a study published in the July 2007 issue of *Diabetes Care*, 11 subjects with insulin resistance and increased abdominal fat used three different diets for 28 days. Each diet had equal calories but different compositions – one was a high-saturated-fat diet, the second was high in carbohydrates and the third was rich in monounsaturated fats. At the end of the 28-day period, researchers measured the effects of each diet on body-fat distribution, insulin resistance and adiponectin levels. Adiponectin is a hormone released by our fat

cells and known to improve insulin sensitivity, reduce inflammation and offer us protection against obesity and metabolic syndrome.

Can you guess the results? Of the three diets, the diet rich in olive oil showed the best outcome, preventing not only belly fat accumulation but also the insulin resistance and drop in adiponectin typically seen in people who eat a high-carbohydrate diet.

Another study in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition (October 2007) found comparable results when using a similar study design. Again, weight maintenance was best with the olive-oil-rich diet, especially when this fat was consumed at breakfast. Improved fasting insulin, blood sugar balance (after meals), good HDL cholesterol and other signs of insulin balance were noted in the 12 insulin-resistant subjects who took part in the study.

But here's the really amazing tidbit. Besides helping us lose weight, balance our hormones, reduce inflammation and keep insulin under control, olive oil also breaks down fat cells we already have! In a study published in the British Journal of Nutrition (December 2003) researchers fed three different diets to rats – one rich in olive oil, another high in polyunsaturated soybean oil and a third high in saturated fat from palm kernel oil. The results showed increased breakdown of fats in fat cell with the olive oil rich diet. Interestingly, the opposite effect was noted with the diet high in soybean oil, which is one of the hormone-hindering food we should avoid 100% of the time.

2. Amazing Avocado: One Quarter to One Eighth Daily

Unfortunately avocados earned an undeserved bad rap during the low-fat craze because they are high in monounsaturated fats. Besides offering an excellent source of healthy fat, avocados are also rich in antioxidants that are great for your complexion.

Avocados contain glutathione, one of the most potent antioxidants and disease-fighting agents available to us. These rich-tasting fruits are also high in heart-friendly vitamin E and potassium. Back in 1996, avocados gained publicity as a healthy food when a study looking at the health benefits of daily avocado consumption was published in the Archives of Medical Research. During the study, 45 people ate avocados every day for a week. They experienced an average 17% drop in total blood cholesterol and their cholesterol ratio also changed in a healthy way: LDL went down and HDL went up.

Researchers now know that avocados are rich in beta-sitosterol, a natural substance shown to significantly lower blood cholesterol levels. In a review article published in the December 1999 issue of the American Journal of Medicine, researchers pointed out that beta-sitosterol was shown to reduce cholesterol in 16 human studies. Another wonderful



benefit of beta-sitosterol is that it helps to balance cortisol, even during exercise. It may also help to restore low DHEA and decrease the inflammation typically associated with the stress of intense exercise.

3. Go Nuts: 10 – 15 Almonds or 1 Tbsp. of Almond Butter

Like avocados, most nuts are an excellent source of the plant sterol beta-sitosterol. Almonds, in particular, contain protein, fiber, plant sterols and several other heart-healthy nutrients. Almonds are also known to slow the absorption of carbohydrates in the body, which may help with weight loss and diabetes management. In addition to lowering cholesterol levels and reducing the risk of coronary heart disease, researchers at the University of Toronto found that eating almonds may reduce the impact of carbohydrate-rich foods on blood sugars. Their data highlights that eating almonds together with carbs slows the rise in blood sugar, which may increase satiety and help keep insulin levels from fluctuating. So if you absolutely have to grab some cheesecake, I guess you should have a few almonds with it.

