

# FOOD FAQ

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## What exactly does it mean to eat a "balanced diet?"

A balanced diet contains neither too much nor too little of key nutrients. These key nutrients include vitamins, minerals, proteins, carbohydrates, fiber, water, and essential fats.

No single natural food is always good or bad: It is the balance that counts. However, some artificial foods (such as hydrogenated oils and toxic contaminants) are never healthy. There are many substances (plants, herbs, etc.) that are toxic to humans. Through millions of years of evolution each species evolved to eat only certain types of foods. Sometimes we can eat parts of a food, such as a fruit but not its seed (example = apricots, seeds are toxic). Other species eat the rest. Othertimes a food contains a toxic chemical which humans cannot tolerate. Sometimes the toxic substances can be eliminated by high temperatures (cooking). Whether or not it is healthy to eat these foods is debated because we may or may not be fully adapted (by evolution) to eat cooked foods.

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## What is the most important nutrient in my diet?

The 1988 US Surgeon General's report identifies the *type of fat* that people eat as one of the most significant factors in health and disease. Certain types of fats called EFAs are critical to good nutrition, because humans cannot make them. Just as humans must consume vitamins, they must also get EFAs (but in far greater quantities).

Failure to eat enough EFAs can cause hardening of the arteries, abnormal clot formation, coronary heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, and many other diseases that lead to premature aging.

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## Is it true that if I eat foods high in saturated, hard fat, most of the fat in my body will be hard?

Yes, eating saturated hard fat makes your arteries hard. You will also develop high blood pressure. But if you eat foods high in EFs, your arteries will remain soft and your blood will be less likely to form clots that obstruct arteries and cause strokes or heart attacks.

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## Can I lower my cholesterol levels by eating less cholesterol?

The human body makes cholesterol. The amount of cholesterol made depends on your overall body chemistry, your genes, and the balance of EFs in your body. Eating cholesterol within the ranges found in most natural foods is not an important factor in increasing or decreasing your cholesterol (unless you have some unusual genetic disease).

Many physicians and publications speak about "bad" cholesterol (LDL) and "good" cholesterol (HDL). Siguel prefers not to use these terms, because they confuse people and have meaning only as indicators of disease. We do not eat "good" or "bad" cholesterol. We eat cholesterol and fat (SFAs, MUFAs and PUFAs). Depending on how much cholesterol and the types of fat we eat, our bodies either increase or decrease both HDL and LDL. Eating the proper types of fats helps your body regulate your cholesterol.

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## How does my body regulate cholesterol levels?

Your body makes cholesterol to keep your membranes fluid or soft. If your membranes are "stiff" with too much "hard" (SFA or TFA) fat, your body makes more cholesterol to compensate and soften them. However, if your membranes are already relatively fluid with "soft" (essential) fat, your body does not have to make cholesterol to compensate, and your cholesterol levels will decrease. This means that eating the proper types of fats will help your body regulate your cholesterol.

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## Are low cholesterol foods good for me?

Many foods low in cholesterol (such as cheese and cream) are high in SFA. Eating large amounts of SFA stimulates your body to make more cholesterol, as a mechanism to counter the effects of excessive SFA. Eating large amounts of carbohydrates and sugars has the same effect. If you **eat too many calories** your cholesterol will likely increase *even if the food you eat have no cholesterol!*

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## Can I cook with polyunsaturated oils?

Sometimes. However, cooking and processing PUFAs can destroy them. They lose their ability to work as essential fats.

Some authors indicate that all polyunsaturated oils can be used for frying. However, highly polyunsaturated oils such as safflower, sunflower, soybean and walnut oil should not be used in cooking at high temperatures. High temperatures will destroy the structure of the PUFAs, thus altering their function in the body.

When frying food, it is safer to use an oil like canola or olive oil, since they have more MUFAs which are more stable for cooking. Even butter compares favorably, since it is more stable at high temperatures. Of course, it is best to avoid fried foods altogether.

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## I heard that MUFAs such as olive oil prevent heart disease. Should I eat more of them?

The body can make MUFAs from SFAs, carbohydrates, and/or proteins. The body's store of MUFAs, which is carefully regulated, can increase for three reasons:

1. Eating too many MUFAs.
2. Eating calories the body does not require (humans convert some excess saturated fats, carbohydrates, and protein into MUFAs).
3. Eating a diet low in EFAs.

The body makes more MUFAs in response to an EFA deficiency. For that reason, it is highly unlikely that diets high in MUFAs alone will prevent heart disease. Most likely, this myth has arisen because researchers overlooked the fact that in countries with low incidence of heart disease, people eat foods high in EFAs *in addition to* foods high in MUFAs. Also, some foods rich in MUFAs, such as olive oil, contain some EFAs and vitamin E.

MUFAs perhaps do not cause as much an imbalance to the body as saturated fats, but they are not required by diet for good health like EFAs are.

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## Are fish oils useful?

Sometimes. Many scientists believe that a large number of people could benefit from eating the w3 fatty acids found in fish oils. But remember, the human body needs a proper balance of *both w3 and w6* fatty acids.

Most humans can make all the w3 derivatives they need from linolenic acid, and do not need to take fish oils. Linolenic acid, the w3 family precursor, is found in many vegetable oils.

Fish oils should be used with great caution and only when vegetable oils are not effective. They deteriorate very quickly, so take proper care to avoid rancidity and try to refrigerate them immediately.

Assuming you have access to uncontaminated fish, fish is healthier than fish oil as part of your long-term diet. Cold water fish usually contains the largest quantities of the w3 linolenic acid derivatives EPA and DHA. However, in rare conditions people need to eat a lot of w3 derivatives and they cannot get enough from fish. These people need fish oils or other sources of w3 derivatives.

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## What should I eat?

All cells and organs need EFAs to work well. Also, balanced hormone production depends on the amount of EFAs circulating in the blood. When your body is deficient in EFAs, all the organs work poorly and you get progressively more ill.

Your diet should include an appropriate balance of the different types of EFAs found in animal and vegetable foods. You may also need oil supplements. The balance depends on your lifetime history and accumulated fat and essential fats.

Any healthy diet includes a variety of foods, so that your body can obtain the wide range of nutrients it needs to function well. Eat a balanced diet, with moderate portions. Although a single day may not contain all nutrients or too few or too many calories, be sure to balance out your diet over the course of days.

Follow a careful diet until you bring risk factors such as cholesterol and blood pressure levels down to reasonable levels. Then you can resume eating some "junk" food, as long as you eat foods in proper balance. Those that cannot survive without beer, hot dogs and butter may compensate, in part, by eating selected vegetable oils with their meals.

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## Should I start eating more polyunsaturated oils?

You should eat more *natural foods rich in EFs*. If you are very deficient in EFs, you should supplement your diet with special EF-rich oils. Remember that oils are made up of a mixture of fatty acids and that each oil has a unique composition of EFs.

You should eat a specially formulated mixture of EFs unique to your body composition. People with different health conditions need different mixtures of EFs. If you are healthy, you can eat a variety of EFs and your body will keep what you need. But if you have a health problem, you need to eat a more precise mixture of EFs. For that purpose you need to consult with a nutritionist and a doctor and get a [fatty acid profile](#) **EFA-SR™** to find out which EFs you need.

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## Is it dangerous to eat the wrong fats?

It is dangerous to eat too many or too few specific fats. In contrast to most vitamins, which may be excreted, fats accumulate in the body. This is why people get fat.

Relative excesses or deficiencies of one fatty acid alter the effects of the others. For example, people who follow low fat diets may not eat enough EFs. People who eat too much fat often eat too much saturated fat. Eating too many w3 derivatives can impair the blood's clotting function and make you bleed too easily. Eating too many w6 derivatives will enhance clotting, which can cause a stroke or heart attack by blocking a key artery in your brain or heart.

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## How can I afford to eat healthy foods?

Fortunately, a healthy diet is less costly than an unhealthy diet. Fresh fruits, vegetables, eggs, and other healthy foods have the vitamins and minerals that are necessary to make your body work well, and cost far less than processed, fried, and restaurant foods where these elements may have been destroyed. Scientists are continually identifying new chemical compounds which protect against cancer and aging. The best policy is to eat natural foods which contain all these compounds and many more.

You can use the money you save to enjoy life, rather than to pay a caregiver to push your wheelchair.

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## If I eat phospholipids, such as Phosphatidyl Serine, will I be able to increase their levels in my body tissues?

Lecithin is a type of phospholipid (there are many types of lipids that contain fatty acids, choline). Phospholipids are digested into two components, choline and PUFAs (although some other parts may be absorbed). They are an excellent source of these two nutrients. In fact, many sources of choline are actually phospholipids such as lecithin. Unfortunately, phospholipids oxidize and degrade very quickly; it is difficult to find good quality products. The human body uses these ingredients to make the phospholipids it needs.

Some of the research on phospholipids was conducted using animal rather than vegetable extracts. There are many different types of phospholipids. Moreover, you would need to eat many grams of phospholipids per day to achieve a substantial change in body tissues.

A better alternative is to eat foods rich in membranes, such as vegetables and lean meats. These foods contain phospholipids. Eating oil supplements rich in PUFAs often allows your body to make as many phospholipids as you need. Quite often, the problem is not a deficiency of choline or phospholipids, but a deficiency of PUFAs.



Portions of this section have been excerpted from the book "[EFAs in Health and Disease](#)" (how to order, table of contents, references, notes, excerpts).

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