

Want to Get Lean? Eat Fat!

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It's true. "Fat" used to be a bad word when it came to eating well. It didn't matter where it came from; it was pegged as bad news. Times have changed.

If you want a lean, mean, fighting-machine body, best to put some fat on your plate. If you simply want to get-it-together to feel better and have more energy, fat should be on the menu too. We're not talking just any kind of fat though — you have to pick the right stuff.

What's the Right Stuff?

Omega-3 fats (think fish) and monounsaturated fats (found in nuts, olive and canola oils, and avocados) top the list. These fats are linked to better health and perhaps a slimmer waistline.

- ***Omega-3 fats*** — Scientists believe omega-3 fats may influence how fat is used and stored in the body. It's possible omega-3s push fat more toward energy use than to storage in your body. Omega-3s may help reduce body fat with or without cutting calories. Animal studies have supported the theory; people studies are encouraging, but not as conclusive. Add exercise on top of upping omega-3s and the loss of body fat can increase.
- ***Monounsaturated fats*** — Monounsaturated fats seem to be a smart move too. They improve blood cholesterol levels, which can decrease your risk of heart disease and they may help with keeping blood sugar levels in check (potentially helpful for appetite control and reducing the risk for diabetes). A few studies have looked at monounsaturated fats as being beneficial for specifically reducing belly fat, but firm findings are lacking.

Why Have Fat on Your Plate?

One of the biggest misunderstandings people have about their diets is that they have to cut out fat, says Evelyn Tribole, MS, RD and co-author of *Intuitive Eating*. "When they think fat, they think calories. But, fat adds to the satisfaction and pleasure of eating. If you're not satisfied, you will be looking around for other things to eat to get that satisfaction and chances are you'll keep eating until you do."

Manuel Villacorta, a former spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and owner of MV Nutrition in San Francisco often sees men struggling to keep their weight in check. "Most men don't want to be on a diet. They think they'll be eating a steady dose of salads. I don't talk with my clients about eating 'light' — I talk with them about eating smart."

Tribole and Villacorta's offer these manly tips for smart, healthy-weight eating that incorporates fats, protein and carbs:

- **Lose the "diet" mentality — it won't serve you well for the long run.** This is all about eating well for life. It's critical that you like what's on your plate.
- **Small frequent meals may be best to keep energy levels up.** Protein is important at meals and snacks — it provides a longer lasting sense of fullness.
- **Breakfast is big.** Make it a meaningful one that contains some protein like an egg, peanut butter or almond butter, yogurt, nuts (toss some in cereal); whole grains like whole wheat bread or English muffin, whole grain cereal; fruit and low-fat or fat-free milk or other calcium-rich food.
- **Step away from the stereotypes of caveman eating (and overeating).** Learn what you can about your food, what's in it, how to make tasty, healthful dishes and what good food can do for your body. Learn from a registered dietitian how much food is enough for you and how much is too much.

- **Avoid distracted eating.** Eating while working, searching the computer or fiddling with your phone means part of your brain does not experience the act of eating. That may affect your memory of eating and mean less satisfaction from your meal. You're likely to eat more food to feel full.
- **Know your stressors and how you respond to them — switch up the response.** Men are known to respond to stress much like some women do, in other words, eating or not eating for emotional reasons.
- **Fold in some fat, but make it the better fats.** Yes, fat is rich in calories, but research suggests that moderate amounts of healthy fats may be just what you need to keep your weight and health in tip-top shape.

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