

37. Is canola oil toxic?

No. The canola oil that is available in the supermarket is not toxic. Canola oil is sometimes associated with another oil called rapeseed and it is probably from this connection that the myth has originated. Canola oil is taken from the seed of the canola plant (*Brassica napus* or *Brassica campestris*), a variety of rapeseed that belongs to the Brassica family. Although it is derived from the same species of plant, canola oil is different from rapeseed oil in that it has lower levels of erucic acid.

The name 'canola' can only be used if the level of erucic acid is less than 2%. The original rapeseed is only used for non-edible purposes, such as the production of nylon.

38. Is olive oil the best oil to choose for cooking?

Olive oil is only one of a number of healthy oils. It is a monounsaturated fat and others in the same category include canola, peanut, macadamia and avocado oils. All of these oils, in small amounts, are good choices for a healthy heart and do not raise blood cholesterol levels.



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39. Are chips cooked in vegetable oil healthy?

No. Some are better than others depending on what type of oil is being used to fry chips. If your local chip shop cooks their chips in a good quality polyunsaturated or monounsaturated oil, they are a better choice than chips cooked in a saturated fat. However, that's not the end of the story. All varieties of fat, regardless of their type, contain the same quantity of fat per gram. This means that a chip cooked in olive or canola oil has exactly the same amount of fat as a chip cooked in palm oil.

Fats in food are a mixture of three different types known as saturated fat, polyunsaturated fat and monounsaturated fat. The different types of fat have different effects on blood cholesterol levels.

Saturated fat is the type of fat that raises blood cholesterol levels. Since raised blood cholesterol is one of the main risk factors for heart disease, it is a good idea to reduce your intake of foods high in saturated fat. Saturated fat can be found in fatty meat and chicken skin, butter, full fat dairy products, many commercially prepared baked products such as biscuits and pastries and most deep-fried takeaway foods, including chips.

Interestingly, saturated fat is found in two vegetable oils, palm and coconut. These two oils are cheap and commonly used for deep-frying and baking. This means that although takeaway outlets may be advertising that they use vegetable oils, they may not be the healthy variety.

40. Does margarine have fewer calories or kilojoules than butter?

There is no difference in calorie or kilojoule value between margarine and butter. They do contain different types of fat; butter is mainly saturated fat and margarines are mainly polyunsaturated or monounsaturated. Reduced fat spreads are available but make sure you check the label, which will tell you what type of spread you are buying. Be careful not to overuse the 'light' varieties otherwise you will get just as much fat as a scrape of regular margarine.

There are two kinds of fat in everyone's diet. The kind you can see and the kind you can't. You can see the fat in beef, lamb and chicken for instance, but you can't see it in chocolate, pastry, eggs, dairy products and nuts.

What's more, foods like butter and margarine are made entirely of fat. Obviously, it's a lot easier to cut down on the fat you can see. All types of fat have the same calorie level and should be reduced for fat loss.

41. Is butter healthier than margarine?

No. You may see research quoted in the media linking margarine to negative health outcomes. However, this research is not relevant to Australia as it was conducted on US margarines that are often higher in trans fats than Australian margarines. The production of margarine in Australia is different, and many manufacturers have made an effort to reduce trans fat levels. Trans fats are a type of fat found naturally in dairy products, beef, veal, lamb and mutton and may be created during the manufacture of some table margarines, shortenings and solid spreads used in the food industry. It is an unsaturated fat but behaves like a saturated fat in the body and raises blood cholesterol levels.

All margarines with the Heart Foundation Tick have less than 1% trans fats, and these levels are amongst the lowest in the world. On the other hand, butter contains a lot of saturated and trans fat, which raises blood cholesterol levels. High total blood cholesterol is one of the main risk factors for heart disease.

For better health, choose any spread based on canola, olive, sunflower, soybean, safflower, peanut, macadamia, sesame seed and grapeseed oils. Look for margarines that have less than 1% trans fatty acids (check the label) and are low in saturated fat.