

Olive Oil

Nutrition News and Views

“Standard Process”

Olive oil is not the only food source for Monounsaturated Fats (MUFA). In the US, people get MUFAs from meat, and dairy items, **THOUGH** these items contain relatively little MUFAs compared to olive oil (85% MUFAs). MUFAs and especially



olive oil are credited with many health benefits. They improve blood sugar metabolism, and Insulin requirements in type 2 diabetics, help reduce high blood pressure, aid inflammation and repair processes (help reduce pain), reduce chances of developing asthma, and some cancers, influence hormone levels, help protect against dementia, assist in reducing DNA damage, inhibit problematic blood clotting, decrease risk for blockages in arteries by easing and opening blood vessels, increasing good cholesterol (HDL) and lower bad cholesterol

(LDL). Extra-virgin olive oil can be part of a healthful diet, but other real foods have similar or other health perks. The benefits ascribed to olive oil are found when it's part of a good diet, like a Mediterranean-type diet. “Remember that the health benefits of the Mediterranean diet come from an overall eating pattern that comprises many elements,” not just olive oil.

Refined olive oil (“virgin,” “pure,” “light,”) has the same fatty acid composition as unrefined, but loses a lot in the additional processing. Phenols, flavonoids, vitamin E, and other nutrients are depleted and the fatty acids are altered so most beneficial effects are lost. Extra-virgin olive oil is simply the fresh juice of the olive, is unrefined, has low levels of acidity, and retains the fatty acids, flavonoids, and phenols present in the whole olive. Other food sources of MUFAs offer the same healthy effects, but getting other untampered-with MUFA-rich oils is not easy. Macademia-nut oil and avocado oil, for example, are high in MUFAs. But such exotic oils are not only more expensive, they're usually over-processed and highly-refined.

Monounsaturated fats are not the only fats to consider. They should be only one of many other types of fatty acids consumed. If relied upon almost exclusively and in excess, cellular imbalances can occur, inhibiting prostaglandins (hormone-like compounds) production. The primary MUFA in olive oil is oleic acid, thought to bring many of the health advantages. Yet the typical North American diet and diets

rich in chicken and pork provide similar amounts of oleic acid as those in Mediterranean areas where consumption of meat and animal fat is low. Health benefits don't come from one ingredient. A problem is olive oil is its low in essential fatty acids (omegas-6s and -3s). Another problem is olive oil's popularity has led to tampering such as mixing in soy oil, other low-quality oils or additives and labeling it "100% extra virgin olive oil." Another tactic is making the oil from poor-quality olives or chemically refined oil that tastes sweeter but is vastly inferior. Low-grade olive oils have lower phenol content and higher acidity (which can be artificially lowered). If an olive oil tastes flat, or worse, reminds you of moldy leaves or ammonia, its poor quality. Good oil can be a bit bitter or spicy (which enhances food you're eating it with).