

# Unsaturated Fats and Brain Health

Many people think all fats are bad for their health, but some fats play an important role in keeping both the body and brain healthy. Unsaturated fats are considered healthy fats which support heart health and provide important benefits for brain function. Research shows that omega-3 fatty acids, a type of unsaturated fat, can help support memory, learning, concentration, and healthy brain aging.

## Types of Unsaturated Fats

### 1. Monounsaturated fats

- Help lower LDL (“bad”) cholesterol while maintaining HDL (“good”) cholesterol, supporting both heart and brain health.
- Found mainly in avocados, olive oil, almonds, peanuts, cashews and some seeds.

### 2. Polyunsaturated fats

- The body needs polyunsaturated fats to stay healthy, but it cannot make them on its own, so they must come from the foods we eat.
- These fats include omega-3 fatty acids and omega-6 fatty acids, which help reduce inflammation and support brain function.
- Found mainly in fish, walnuts, flaxseed, chia seeds, sunflower oil and soybean oil.



## How Unsaturated Fats Support Brain Health

1. **Support Learning and Memory** - Omega-3 fats help support brain functions such as memory, concentration, and learning. Research suggests that people who consume more omega-3s may have better brain function and healthier aging.
2. **Maintain Brain Cells** – DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), a type of Omega 3, helps build and protect brain cells. Getting enough DHA helps brain cells communicate effectively and supports overall brain function.
3. **Reduce Inflammation** – Chronic inflammation can contribute to cognitive decline and neurodegenerative diseases. Omega-3 fats have inflammatory properties that can help protect brain tissues from damage.
4. **Promote Health Aging** – Eating a diet rich in unsaturated fats, such as the Mediterranean diet, may help slow cognitive decline and reduce the risk of conditions such as Alzheimer's disease.

## Ways to add more unsaturated fats in your diet:

- Use olive oil instead of butter when preparing vegetables.
- Add nuts or seeds to your breakfast, such as oatmeal or yogurt.
- Enjoy avocado on toast or add it to salads and sandwiches.
- Aim to eat fish such as salmon or tuna at least once a week, or choose plant-based omega-3 sources such as walnuts, chia seeds, and flaxseeds several times a week.

