

Margarine vs. Butter

For years, margarine was pushed as a heart healthy alternative to butter. Butter was known to be filled with cholesterol and saturated fat that were bad for blood cholesterol and increased the risk of heart disease. Because margarine was made from unsaturated vegetable oils, it was assumed it would be better for the heart.

Unfortunately, research showed that this wasn't necessarily the case. Some forms of margarine - specifically the hard stick margarine - were actually worse for the heart than butter. This was because they contained large amounts of trans fats.



So, what should you choose to use? The best option is to use liquid vegetable oils or a soft tub margarine that is labelled trans fat free or non-hydrogenated or butter and your last choice should be the regular margarines.

The following table can help you identify between some of the dietary fats.

DIETARY FATS			
Type of Fat	Main Source	State at Room Temperature	Effect on Cholesterol Levels
Monounsaturated	Olives; olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil; cashews, almonds, peanuts, and most other nuts; avocados	Liquid	Lowers LDL; raises HDL
Polyunsaturated	Corn, soybean, safflower, and cottonseed oils; fish	Liquid	Lowers LDL; raises HDL
Saturated	Whole milk, butter, cheese, and ice cream; red meat; chocolate; coconuts, coconut milk, and coconut oil	Solid	Raises both LDL and HDL
Trans	Most margarines; vegetable shortening; partially hydrogenated vegetable oil; deep-fried chips; many fast foods; most commercial baked goods	Solid or semi-solid	Raises LDL