

The Best Butter Substitute, Plus 5 Other Healthy Fat Swaps

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Swapping [butter](#) for healthier [fats](#) might be one of the simplest changes you can make for your health. A recent large-scale study found that replacing just 1 tablespoon (tbsp) of butter daily with a plant-based oil reduced the risk of premature death by 17 percent.^[1]

One possible explanation? Butter is high in [saturated fat](#), which raises [low-density lipoprotein \(LDL\) cholesterol](#) and contributes to [heart disease](#).^[2]

So, how can you lower your butter consumption? Consider the following substitutions. What you choose will depend on how you plan to use it, your flavor preferences, and whether you're dealing with [food allergies](#).

The Healthiest Butter Substitutes for Baking

You can reduce the amount of butter in almost any baked good with one of the following substitutes. Just remember, a [butter alternative](#) doesn't necessarily

Unsweetened Applesauce

Muffins and quick breads often call for melted butter, which you can replace with equal parts plain, unsweetened applesauce and a heart-healthy oil like canola.

[Apples'](#) natural sweetness is so mild, it works well without changing the flavor too much. It also provides fat-free moisture and nearly 3 grams (g) of [fiber](#) per cup.^[3]

Because applesauce is mostly water, you may need to reduce the amount of other liquids in the recipe, Feller said. Too much moisture can make your muffins soggy inside.

Plain Greek Yogurt

Full-fat Greek [yogurt](#) has a consistency similar to butter, and its natural acidity helps keep baked goods soft and delicate in texture. And yes, go for the full-fat version versus low-fat, says [Kristen Smith, RDN](#), an Atlanta-based registered dietitian-nutritionist and a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. "You'll have a better texture and flavor profile."

Unlike butter, full-fat Greek yogurt delivers more than just fat. One cup of plain, full-fat Greek yogurt has just 230 calories and 11 g of fat (nearly 6 g from saturated), yet provides 21 g of [protein](#) and 272 mg, or 21 percent of your daily value (DV), of [calcium](#).^[4]

Don't replace all the butter in a recipe with Greek yogurt — you'll get the best results if you swap out half. And be aware, the pronounced flavor of Greek yogurt may be noticeable.

Vegan Butter



“If you’re doing real baking and it needs consistency, I suggest using a non-hydrogenated plant-based spread,” Feller says. Let’s say you signed up to bake dozens of cookies for a bake sale. A product that looks and feels like butter will help ensure each batch comes out the same.

Be sure to check that the product says “non-hydrogenated.” Hydrogenating vegetable oil (adding hydrogen to make the oil solid) creates trans fats, which raise LDL cholesterol and lower healthier high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol.^[5]

Non-hydrogenated plant butter, on the other hand, is made by blending liquid plant oils like canola or olive oil with coconut, palm, or palm kernel oil, which are naturally firm at room temperature thanks to their saturated fat content.^[6] As a result, plant butter has no trans fats and considerably less saturated fat than traditional butter.

But the exact amount of saturated fat can vary by brand, so check labels carefully. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that no more than 10 percent of your daily calories come from saturated fat.^[7]

The Healthiest Substitutes for Butter as a Spread

Instead of using stick butter or whipped butter on bread or crackers, try these options. Many are lower in saturated fat and calories, while providing vitamins, minerals, and heart-healthy fats.

Mashed Avocado



728 mg (more than 15 percent DV) of [potassium](#).^[8]

“One of my personal favorites, and a very nutrient-dense option, is to spread some mashed avocado on toast and top with either an egg, some chopped nuts, or dried fruit like cranberries,” Smith says.

Nut Butter

Depending on the [nut](#), you can swap in tons of nutrients and flavor with a nut butter. “That can really up the protein of a meal or snack and provide healthy fats,” Smith says.

For example, almond butter packs 7 g of protein and 3 g of fiber, plus vitamin E, calcium, [iron](#), and [magnesium](#) into each 2 tbsp serving.^[10] Spread nut butter on whole-grain toast and top with sliced apple for additional fiber and vitamins.

Hummus

Made of pureed chickpeas, [olive oil](#), herbs and spices, [lemon juice](#), and sesame seed paste, hummus is a Middle Eastern staple that’s now sold in supermarkets throughout the United States. Two tbsp of this spread provides about 2 g each of protein and fiber, but it has only 71 calories and 5.3 g of fat (mostly from heart-healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat).^[11]

5 Other Healthy Fat Swaps to Try



and hummus, which provide a creamy texture similar to mayonnaise. The flavor of Greek yogurt is most similar to mayo, making it ideal for chicken salad. Meanwhile, avocado and hummus can be used as a spread in sandwiches and wraps. “With avocado and hummus, you’re not necessarily going to get a lower-calorie spread, but it will have more nutritional value by offering more fiber than mayo,” says [Joan Salge Blake, RDN](#), a registered dietitian-nutritionist and clinical professor at Boston University.

Instead of Sour Cream Greek yogurt or pureed cottage cheese each can give you that creamy mouthfeel with far less saturated fat. Two tbsp of sour cream have 1 g of protein and 3.5 g of saturated fat.^[12] The same amount of full-fat Greek yogurt has triple the protein and less than 1 g of saturated fat.^[4] That holds true for low-fat cottage cheese, too.^[13]

Instead of Heavy Cream Substitute heavy cream for the same amount of evaporated skim milk. Evaporated skim milk offers a similar consistency for around 200 calories and less than 1 g of fat per cup.^[14] Meanwhile, 1 cup of heavy cream packs more than 800 calories and 85 g of fat (49 g from saturated).^[15] Blake uses evaporated skim milk in casseroles and soups, and to make sauce for fettuccine alfredo. Just don’t expect it to whip up into a fluffy topping.

Instead of Cream Cheese Neufchâtel cheese is made the same way as cream cheese so it ticks all the cream-cheesy boxes. But while full-fat cream cheese must have a minimum of 33 percent milkfat content by weight, Neufchâtel can have a maximum of 33 percent milkfat.^[16] As a result, Neufchâtel has fewer calories and saturated fat and more protein than cream cheese. One ounce (oz) of Neufchâtel provides 71.7 calories, 3.6 g of saturated fat, and 2.6 g of protein.

fat — more than 20 g per 2 tbsp.^{1,2,3} If you're trying to produce a heart-healthier product, coconut oil might not be your best choice," Smith notes. For cooking, use avocado oil or canola oil instead.

The Takeaway

Butter is high in saturated fat, which may increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Butter substitutes like unsweetened applesauce, plain Greek yogurt, and mashed avocado can reduce saturated fat and calories while also adding nutrients.

Replace other common sources of saturated fat in the diet, such as cream cheese, coconut oil, and heavy cream, for additional benefits.

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