

The Hidden Fat Making You Fat: How Omega-6 Fuels Cravings and Weight Gain

By Robert Ferguson

Did you know that the type of fat you eat might be why you're struggling with weight gain and uncontrollable cravings? **Omega-6 fatty acids**, commonly found in cooking oils and processed foods, have quietly become one of the biggest drivers of overeating in today's diets. But it's not just about calories—omega-6 fats can trigger biological changes in your body that increase appetite and promote fat storage. Let's dive into what omega-6 is doing to your body and how you can regain control.

What Are Omega-6 Fatty Acids?

Omega-6 fatty acids are a type of fat found in oils like soybean oil, corn oil, sunflower oil, and many packaged snacks. While omega-6 fats are essential for your body, you only need small amounts.

In the past, people consumed omega-6 and omega-3 fats in a balanced ratio of **1:1**. Today, most people consume on average **20 times more omega-6 than omega-3**, leading to serious health consequences. This imbalance is largely due to the rise of processed foods and cheap, omega-6-rich vegetable oils in modern diets (Simopoulos, 2002; Gunstone, 2004).

How Too Much Omega-6 Affects Your Body

Eating too many omega-6 fats, especially a type called **linoleic acid**, creates a chain reaction in your body:

1. **It Triggers Cravings**

Linoleic acid converts into molecules called **endocannabinoids**, which act on your brain like cannabis compounds, causing the infamous "munchies." These endocannabinoids make you feel hungrier, even when you've eaten enough (Simopoulos, 2016; Weiss, 1983).

2. **It Encourages Fat Storage**

The same endocannabinoids that make you eat more also tell your body to store extra fat, especially in the belly area.

3. **It Disrupts Hunger Control**

Excess omega-6 can interfere with your brain's ability to regulate hunger, leading to constant cravings and difficulty managing portion sizes (Kritchevsky, 2000).

Oils High in Linoleic Acid

Many popular cooking oils are high in linoleic acid, making them a significant source of omega-6 in the diet. What I share with my clients—and what I encourage you to do—is to choose oils where linoleic acid makes up less than 20% of their total fat content. Here's a helpful breakdown to guide your choices:

High Linoleic Acid Oils

- **Soybean Oil:** ~55% linoleic acid
- **Corn Oil:** ~58% linoleic acid
- **Sunflower Oil (Regular):** ~65% linoleic acid
- **Safflower Oil (High Linoleic):** ~75% linoleic acid
- **Cottonseed Oil:** ~52% linoleic acid
- **Grapeseed Oil:** ~70% linoleic acid
- **Sesame Oil:** ~42% linoleic acid
- **Peanut Oil:** ~32% linoleic acid
- **Rice Bran Oil:** ~35% linoleic acid

Moderate Linoleic Acid Oils

- **Canola Oil:** ~20-28% linoleic acid

Low Linoleic Acid Oils (Better Choices)

- **Extra Virgin Olive Oil:** ~10% linoleic acid
- **Extra Virgin Avocado Oil:** ~10-14% linoleic acid
- **Extra Virgin Coconut Oil:** ~1-2% linoleic acid
- **Extra Virgin Palm Oil:** ~10% linoleic acid

The percentages for these oils were referenced from Gunstone (2004), Weiss (1983), Kritchevsky (2000), and verified through the USDA FoodData Central database.

How to Fix the Omega-6 Problem

The good news is that you can rebalance your omega-6 and omega-3 intake with a few simple steps:

1. **Avoid Processed Foods**

Processed snacks and fried foods are often loaded with omega-6-rich oils. Focus on eating whole, unprocessed foods prepared at home.

2. **Choose Better Cooking Oils**

Replace high-linoleic oils with healthier options like olive oil, avocado oil, or coconut oil.

3. **Other Fats**

When you're not using cooking oils, opt for beef tallow, lard, and grass-fed butter.

4. **Increase Omega-3 Intake**

Omega-3 fats counteract the effects of omega-6. Eat more omega-3-rich foods like fatty fish (e.g., salmon, mackerel, tuna), pasture raised eggs, grass-fed butter and beef. If getting enough omega-3s from food is challenging, consider a high-quality supplement like BalanceOil+, which provides omega-3s and polyphenols for better absorption (Simopoulos, 2016).

5. **Read Food Labels Carefully**

Check ingredients for hidden sources of omega-6, especially in salad dressings, baked goods, and margarine.

Why It Matters

The imbalance of omega-6 in your diet isn't just about calories—it's a key driver of weight gain, uncontrollable cravings, and fat storage. Additionally, the excessive intake of omega-6 fatty acids is linked to systemic inflammation, which can manifest as symptoms like dry eyes and skin, vertigo, brittle nails, hair loss, elevated triglycerides and blood pressure, and even behavioral challenges such as ADHD or brain fog, and increased risk of dementia and Alzheimer's. By reducing omega-6 intake and increasing omega-3s, you can regain control over your appetite, enhance your metabolism, and significantly improve your overall health.

Take Action Today

Don't let omega-6 fats control your health. Take charge by making smarter food and cooking oil choices. Balancing your fats can help you lose weight, feel better, and take back control of your appetite.

Citations

- The high linoleic acid percentages in **soybean oil, corn oil, sunflower oil**, and other high-omega-6 oils are referenced from Gunstone (2004) and the USDA database.
- Moderate linoleic acid percentages for **canola oil** and **vegetable oil blends** were sourced from Kritchevsky (2000).
- Lower linoleic acid percentages in **olive oil, avocado oil, coconut oil**, and **palm oil** are based on Weiss (1983) and verified through the USDA database.

- The importance of reducing high linoleic acid oils for omega-6 to omega-3 balance was discussed in Simopoulos (2002).

References

1. Gunstone, F. D. (2004). *The Chemistry of Oils and Fats: Sources, Composition, Properties, and Uses*. CRC Press. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781482272041>
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). (n.d.). *FoodData Central*. Retrieved from <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov>
3. Kritchevsky, D. (2000). *Fats and Oils in Human Nutrition*. *World Review of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 88(1), 117-120.
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5. Simopoulos, A. P. (2002). *The Importance of the Omega-6/Omega-3 Balance in Health and Disease*. *Experimental Biology and Medicine*, 227(6), 480-484.
6. Simopoulos, A. P. (2016). *An Increase in the Omega-6/Omega-3 Fatty Acid Ratio Increases the Risk for Obesity*. *Nutrients*, 8(3), 128. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu8030128>

This article combines research and practical tips to help you take control of your health by rebalancing your fat intake. Start making changes today! To learn more about how you can reduce your intake of Omega-6s and increase your Omega-3s, consider scheduling a free consultation with me, Robert Ferguson.

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