



Seed Oils: Friend or Foe?

It comes as no surprise that the internet has found its latest villain—this time, it's seed oils. Critics claim these "toxic" oils are responsible for everything from inflammation to weight gain, heart issues, and more. TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook are filled with influencers warning you to avoid them at all costs.

Let's set the record straight.

The so-called "hateful eight"—canola, corn, cottonseed, grapeseed, rice bran, safflower, soy, and sunflower oils—are often criticized for their high omega-6 fat content, particularly linoleic acid, which is converted into arachidonic acid in the body. While critics argue that arachidonic acid contributes to inflammation, this is somewhat misleading. Only a small amount of linoleic acid is converted into arachidonic acid, and not all the resulting compounds promote inflammation. In fact, current research shows linoleic acid may reduce inflammation and help protect against diseases like heart disease.

We often hear about the benefits of omega-3 fatty acids, mainly alpha-linolenic acid, which is found in small amounts in certain seed oils like flaxseed, soybean, and canola oils. Omega-3s help reduce inflammation, lower the risk of chronic diseases, and support brain and eye health.

Linoleic acid, the omega-6 in seed oils, is far from harmful. In fact, it's essential because the human body cannot produce it. This nutrient plays a crucial role in skin and hair health, brain function, and yes, even controlling inflammation. Besides seed oils, linoleic acid can be found in nuts, seeds, meat, and eggs.

Those who advise against seed oils often recommend olive, avocado, or coconut oil instead. While olive and avocado oils are high in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats and are great choices for cooking oil, coconut oil is primarily saturated fat and should be consumed in moderation.

So why are so many people singing the praises of life without seed oils? Well, due to their low cost, neutral flavor, and long shelf life, seed oils are widely used for deep frying and are found in packaged products like chips, crackers, baked goods, and salad dressings. We all know that overconsumption of these highly processed foods isn't good for us. It's important to recognize that cutting these foods out is what typically leads to health improvements, not the elimination of seed oils. If you're eating a high-quality diet based primarily on wholesome foods, the use of small amounts of cooking oil – seed oil or not – is likely not a cause for concern.

The Bottom Line

It's unnecessary to avoid seed oils. Here are the key takeaways:

- Seed oils can be part of a healthy diet when used in moderation. They are safe to use in healthy recipes such as stir-fries, roasted vegetables, and sautéed dishes.
- It's best to limit fried foods and processed packaged products, not because of the seed oils themselves, but because these foods often contain other unhealthy ingredients like refined flour, sugar, preservatives, or excessive salt. Additionally, the seed oils in these products may be industrially refined, further reducing their healthfulness.
- Seed oils with omega-3 fats, like canola and soybean oil, are especially beneficial.
- The healthiest sources of omega-6 fats come from whole foods like walnuts, cashews, hemp seeds, tofu, sunflower seeds, eggs, and almonds.
- The least healthy sources of omega-6 fats are found in processed foods like chips, crackers, and baked goods.

In summary, seed oils are safe to use in nutritious, home-cooked meals. The key is to focus on whole, minimally processed foods and limit your intake of heavily processed products, regardless of the oils they contain.

Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Nuts



Brussels sprouts, which are in peak season from October through December, are delicious when cooked until golden and crispy. Feel free to experiment with additional seasonings such as thyme, ground mustard seed, or your favorite spice blend.

Ingredients:

- 1 lb Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 2 tbsp canola or vegetable oil (commonly a mix of seed oils)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup nuts (such as almonds, walnuts, or pecans), chopped
- 1 tsp lemon juice (optional)

Instructions:

Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C).

In a large mixing bowl, toss the Brussels sprouts with the oil until well coated. Season with salt and pepper.

Spread them in a single layer on a baking sheet. Roast for 20-25 minutes, flipping the sprouts halfway through to ensure even roasting. They are ready when golden brown and crispy on the edges.

While the sprouts are roasting, lightly toast the chopped nuts in a dry skillet over medium heat for 2-3 minutes, stirring frequently until fragrant. Set aside.

Once the Brussels sprouts are done, remove from the oven and drizzle with a little lemon juice (if using). Sprinkle with the toasted nuts.