


Ask Leyla: Is my daily nut intake overloading me on omega 6 fats?

Q: In an effort to avoid packaged cereals and bread for breakfast, I eat a concoction of various nuts and seeds which I mix up myself. I eat that about four days a week, eggs the other days. Is the nut mixture overloading me on omega 6 fatty acids?

A: First, I want to commend you on making your breakfasts healthier! The addition of nuts and seeds provides B vitamins and vitamin E, as well as important minerals like calcium, chromium, magnesium, selenium and zinc. A good amount of fiber is in there too, making it a well balanced way to start the day. As a rule, keep your nut and seed intake to not more than two ounces per day. Because nuts are calorically dense, it's easy to overdo it. Too often I've seen my low carb patients hit a weight loss plateau due to overconsumption of nuts, seeds and nut butters—or worse, they gain weight. 

While nuts contain some omega 6 fats, along with smaller amounts of omega 3s, the primary source of omega 6 fats in the standard American diet (SAD) comes from grains and vegetable oils. Unfortunately, proinflammatory oils such as corn, safflower, sunflower, soybean and canola oils are still touted by the American Heart Association as healthy. They're not.

We know the ratio of omega 6 to omega 3 is critical to good health. The SAD diet puts that ratio at an unhealthy 20:1 and as much as 40:1 if the majority of your diet consists of processed and junk food. A 2:1 ratio is healthier which is what we get when we eliminate junk food, vegetable oils and most grains.

Another source of unhealthy amounts of omega 6 fats is commercial beef (also pork and chicken). The fact that the animals are fed grain (and soy) is the reason for the omega 6 overload. While *all* cattle are grass fed at first, factory-farmed cattle are soon switched to a grain-based diet to fatten them up for slaughter. However, grass fed and *grass finished* beef contain two to five times the amount of omega 3s compared to factory-farmed animals.

Eating whole, unprocessed, clean foods the way they're found in nature with limited grain intake is the best way to ensure a healthy ratio of omega 6 to omega 3 fats in your overall eating plan.

To your health!

As you may know, I've been doing a weekly "Q&A with Leyla" podcast feature with Dr. Hoffman. Now you can get my perspective and expertise every Friday on my own episode of the *Intelligent Medicine* Podcast. If you missed last week's, you can [listen here](#). To be sure you don't miss out on any of my important insights and information, [subscribe today!](#)