# Low Omega-6 Diet for AERD[[1]](#footnote-1)

## Objective

Reduce Omega-6 intake to no more than 4 grams per day and no more than 2 grams per meal. Increase Omega-3 intake to 3 grams per day, either through food choices or fish oil or algae supplementation. **Decreased Omega-6 is critically important*,*** increased Omega-3 provides limited benefit.

Fish oil can be used to add Omega-3 to your diet. The label will indicate how much Omega-3 in each capsule, it is much less than the size of the capsule itself. For example, NatureMade brand of fish oil is readily available at 1200 mg size, each capsule containing 360 mg of Omega-3. 8 of these provides just under 3g omega-3. Any brand works, just make sure it is purified to remove mercury.

## Step 1

Review the following to check on the Omega-6 content in foods you eat:

<http://nutritiondata.self.com>

Key rule of thumb: 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil contains 5 grams of Omega-6.

BEWARE: many, but not all foods list an actual value for Omega-6. Some foods have a tilde character (~). Tilde means “I don’t know” and should be treated as a high number given no other information. Hunt around on the site for other similar foods and you may find a value. For example, cooked quinoa shows a ~, raw shows a value.

**Check the nutritiondata.self.com web site if in doubt about any particular food.**

## Step 2 – Specific Dietary Guidelines

Completely eliminate all of the following (with few exceptions as indicated):

All vegetable oil. Eliminate olive oil because of the controversy surrounding the sale of olive oil that has been illegally mixed with vegetable oil.

All margarine, including butter/oil blends.

All salad dressing (except fat free).

All mayonnaise and related foods such as aioli (except fat free).

All deep fried food: chicken wings, French fries, fried chicken, fried fish, etc.

All pan fried food.

All chips: potato, corn, tortilla chips, Doritos, etc.

All crackers: Ritz, Club, Triscuits, etc.

All cookies, cake, pie, muffins, biscuits, pastries, croissants, donuts, pancakes, waffles.

All cereal bars, granola bars, energy bars, protein bars.

All nuts and seeds (except flax and chia). All nut butters.

All peanuts and peanut butter.

All sausage, hot dogs, etc.

All fatty cuts of meat.

All avocado and related foods such as guacamole.

Some grains such as quinoa. Check the nutrition web site.

*IMPORTANT: All commercially prepared, prepackaged foods should be highly suspect. Almost everything contains added oils. Read all labels very carefully.*

Moderate Quantities are safe

Lean cuts of meat and chicken. Includes lean ground beef. Grass fed beef is strongly preferred.

Oatmeal. This is somewhat high in Omega-6 but small amounts are ok.

Pasta. No yolk pastas are available and preferred.

Potatoes.

Eggs. Omega-3 eggs are preferred.

Butter. Butter from grass fed cows is preferred.

Bread and bagels. Avoid whole wheat bread as this is high in omega-6.

Dairy products such as cheese, yogurt.

Plain ice cream, without added fudge, cookie pieces, etc.

Bacon.

*More to be added based on your personal preferences.*

Eat the following in any quantities (prepared properly)

Anything from the ocean.

White rice.

Most fruits and vegetables.

Some beans can be high in Omega-6, check the nutrition web site for your favorites.

*More to be added based on your personal preferences.*

## Hints and Tips

Many of the items that must be eliminated can be prepared safely at home by using butter. Pie crust, cake, and cookies are good examples.

Ghee is a clarified butter, prepared using an Indian method. Normal butter burns when you fry foods, ghee does not. Therefore, you can use it to pan fry foods such as breaded chicken or fish.

Ghee can also be melted and used in any recipe that calls for vegetable oil. For example, this means that foods on the “do not eat” list, such as pancakes or waffles, can be made at home using ghee instead of oil.

In addition to ghee, coconut oil is also low in Omega-6 and can be used as a substitute for vegetable oil. Both ghee and coconut oil will add some flavor to the food being prepared.

Pretzels are a good snack choice.

Fat free crackers are available and safe.

For those who enjoy chocolate, much of the commercially produced chocolate candy is made with oil. Higher quality chocolate, such as Ghirardelli or Godiva is made with cocoa butter which is lower in omega-6 and therefore safer. Be careful of other ingredients mixed in, nuts for example, which will dramatically increase the omega-6 level.

## Eating Out

This is the single biggest problem with this diet because you simply don’t know what is in the food being served. Even finding some “safe” dishes in restaurants you frequent can be a problem because recipes change without notice and new chefs are hired who cook slightly differently.

Most “American food” restaurants such as TGI Fridays or Chilli’s mainly have foods that will cause problems. All of the typical Chinese fast food is problematic.

Seafood is an excellent choice, provided it is boiled, broiled or baked with no added oil for cooking. Fish that is pan-seared in butter (not margarine) is good. American seafood restaurants like Red Lobster typically serve fried fish which is not safe on this diet.

Italian food, such as pasta, lasagna, and stuffed shells, is generally a safe choice. Make sure it doesn’t contain sausage.

Steak can be OK, provided it is not prepared with a marinade or served with additional sauce which may very well contain vegetable oil. In general, marinade containing oil does not completely burn off during cooking and can cause problems.

Your best bet is to speak with the restaurant manager. Explain that you are severely allergic to all vegetable oil and shortening and ask for a recommendation. They will understand the word “allergy” but will be very confused if you talk about Samters, Omega-6, etc.

If all else fails, have a large salad, no dressing. Hamburgers are also reasonably safe. Beware of “American Cheese” because it is often “pasteurized cheese food” and contains vegetable oil. Substitute a salad (no dressing) for the fries that normally come with a burger.

## Sources

Ghee is generally not available in supermarkets but may be available in health/organic food stores. It is also available here:

<http://www.swansonvitamins.com/purity-farms-organic-ghee-clarified-butter-13-oz-solid-oil>

Trader Joe’s has:

Omega-3 eggs

Wide variety of cookies and snacks that are very low fat or made with butter. They even have refrigerated cookie dough. These are all safe in moderate quantities.

Kerrygold butter is imported from Ireland and is made from milk from grass fed cows. It is available from many supermarkets and organic food stores. Their web site is a good source for recipes.

Mamma Chia Peanut & Dark Chocolate Chia Vitality Bar is a granola type bar that is very low in Omega-6. It is available at Target stores.

## Sample Meals

These are some sample meals that work well, but are just examples. Concentrate on eating fresh, simple, unprocessed foods and completely avoid the middle aisles of the super market where pre-packaged manufactured foods reside. The problem with those foods is that manufacturers typically add vegetable oil/shortening and even small amounts can cause problems.

Breakfast

Raisin bran, milk, orange juice.

Home made pancakes or waffles. Use ghee instead of oil during preparation and cooking.

Eggs, any style. Use omega-3 eggs, and/or cut back on the number of egg yolks you eat, this is where the omega-6 resides.

Omelets with cheese and sautéed vegetables. Use a small amount of butter for cooking, or steam the vegetables.

Morning Snack

Fresh fruit – apples, bananas, grapes, oranges, etc. Whatever is in season.

Lunch

Bagel and yogurt.

Grilled cheese sandwich.

Home made soup. Most store bought is high in omega-6.

Various lunch meats such as ham, turkey, or chicken are generally ok, pick the lowest fat varieties. This opens up options to make a sandwich or have a sub.

New York style pizza.

Afternoon Snack

Cookies made with butter. These can be home made or some are available at Trader Joe’s.

Pretzels.

Dinner

8 oz sirloin steak, baked potato with butter/sour cream, green beans.

Grilled chicken breast, macaroni and cheese (home prepared), carrots.

Cheeseburger with side salad.

Broiled fish with rice and broccoli.

Grilled shrimp with pasta.

Cheese fondue

Spaghetti with meat sauce. I’ve used Classico sauce from the supermarket, it says it has < 2% oil

Lasagna

Stuffed shells

Fettuccini Alfredo, prepared from scratch with reduced butter.

Large salad with grilled chicken.

Evening Snack

French bread and cheddar cheese, grapes.

Ice cream.

## Additional Reading

For those who are interested, the data from the self.com web site originally came from a USDA database:

<https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/search>

This database is more up to date but much more difficult to read. Many, but not all foods have a “Full Report” button. This will provide a full list of all nutrients. Omega-6 is often listed as “n-6” under the Lipids section of the nutrients.

Bill Lands (also published as William Lands) did most of the original research regarding the importance of balancing Omega-6 and Omega-3 nutrients in the diet. A good (though fairly technical) review is available at:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4537720/#B63>

Some of the references in this paper track back to the author’s web site which provides much more information.

1. This diet was adapted from information originally provided by Dr. Tanya Laidlaw at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)