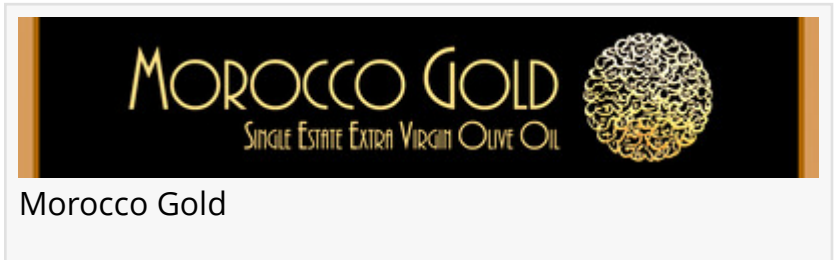


Why the NHS May Soon Recommend Plant-Based Oils Over Butter

New research may prompt the NHS to recommend plant-based oils like olive oil over butter for better heart health and sustainable eating.



LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, July 29, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For

decades, the question of whether butter or plant-based oils are healthier has been a topic of ongoing debate among the public and the scientific community. Now, with the mounting body of evidence supporting the health benefits of plant-based oils and a growing emphasis on preventive care, the NHS may be poised to recommend a major shift in UK dietary guidelines — one that encourages Britons to swap saturated fats like butter for heart-healthy alternatives such as olive oil, rapeseed oil, and sunflower oil.

The Scientific Case for Plant-Based Oils

Recent studies have consistently linked the regular consumption of plant-based oils with reduced risks of cardiovascular disease, lower cholesterol levels, and improved metabolic health. Unlike butter, which is high in saturated fat, plant oils tend to be rich in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats — the so-called "good fats."

A landmark meta-analysis published in [The Lancet Public Health](#) examined over 30 cohort studies involving more than a million participants. The research found that individuals who replaced saturated fats with unsaturated fats from plant oils experienced a 20% lower risk of heart disease and stroke. Olive oil was associated with anti-inflammatory benefits, improved arterial function, and lower LDL (bad cholesterol) levels.

From Research to Public Policy

In response to such compelling findings, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN), which advises Public Health England, has been reviewing existing recommendations for fat consumption. Draft proposals leaked earlier this year suggest that future guidelines may favour plant-based oils over traditional animal fats, including butter, lard, and ghee.

The NHS has historically encouraged a balanced diet with limited saturated fat, but this shift — if officially implemented — would mark a more assertive stance. Dietitians believe this would align the UK more closely with Mediterranean-style diets, which have long been praised for their role in reducing the incidence of chronic diseases.

Why Olive Oil Leads the Pack

Among all the plant-based oils, extra virgin olive oil holds a unique position. Not only is it rich in heart-protective monounsaturated fats, but it also contains potent antioxidants, such as [oleocanthal and hydroxytyrosol](#). These compounds help combat oxidative stress, inflammation, and endothelial dysfunction — key contributors to conditions such as atherosclerosis and hypertension.

Research from the [University of Cambridge](#) has recently highlighted the benefits of olive oil in older adults, suggesting that daily consumption may improve cognitive function and reduce frailty. As a result, health professionals are increasingly recommending olive oil as a daily dietary staple, not just for cooking but also as a dressing or dip.

Environmental Considerations and Sustainability

Another factor driving the NHS's potential shift is the environmental impact of food choices. Butter and other animal-based fats generally have a higher carbon footprint due to the intensive farming methods involved in dairy production. By contrast, plant-based oils often require fewer resources and generate fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

With the NHS committed to supporting the UK government's broader climate targets, dietary advice that benefits both personal and planetary health makes sense. Swapping butter for olive or rapeseed oil could be a small yet effective change that contributes to national sustainability goals.

What This Means for the Average Briton

If the NHS adopts a more plant-forward approach to fat intake, Britons may start to see changes in national campaigns, such as Change4Life, or school nutrition programmes. We may also see reformulations in ready-made meals and food labelling that favour the use of plant oils over saturated animal fats.

For everyday consumers, the takeaway is straightforward: consider using olive oil on toast instead of butter, swap sunflower oil for deep-frying instead of lard, and explore plant-based spreads with added omega-3 fatty acids. Not only are these oils healthier, but they also offer more versatility and often a more subtle flavour profile.

Voices from the Frontline

Dietitian Emma Rees, an NHS nutrition lead in Birmingham, supports the change. “We’re not saying everyone must go vegan or stop enjoying the occasional buttered crumpet,” she explains. “But small, consistent swaps — like switching to olive oil — can make a meaningful difference to heart health over time.”

This view is echoed by GP Dr. Alistair Hammond, who frequently treats patients with high cholesterol and early-stage hypertension. “When I advise dietary changes, I always mention plant oils. The science is clear. It's time our national guidance reflects that clarity.”

A Shift Towards Prevention

The NHS has made it clear that prevention is a central pillar of future healthcare strategy. Encouraging the use of plant-based oils over butter represents a simple, actionable step in that direction. With robust research, sustainability benefits, and professional support all aligned, it seems increasingly likely that plant oils — especially olive oil — will soon take centre stage in Britain’s official health advice.

Whether drizzled over salad, stirred into soup, or used to fry an egg, olive oil may well become the NHS’s new golden standard.

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