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Buying a Healthy Butter Substitute

Shopping tips from the American Dietetic Association.

By [Janis Graham](#)
From [Reader's Digest](#)

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Finding the best one depends on what you're looking for, says Constance Brown-Riggs, an American Dietetic Association spokesperson, who offers these guidelines:

- If you want the smoothest buttery taste, look for labels that say original or regular. Both varieties have up to 9 grams of fat per tablespoon (almost as much as butter's 11 grams), which is why they mimic the real thing. But their mix of poly- and monounsaturated fats is much better for your heart than the saturated fat in butter.



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Be a smarter spread shopper!

- If you're worried about your waistline, opt for light tubs or sticks made from blended oils like canola, olive, or soybean. At about 50 calories a tablespoon (versus 102 in butter), they're the best lower-calorie option for good taste and texture. While fat-free spreads have just 5 to 20 calories a tablespoon, their high water content makes them less satisfying, so you may use more.
- If you're concerned about high cholesterol, look for products labeled with added plant sterols, extracts shown to cut bad LDL.
- If you want to cook with it, check for the warning "not recommended for frying or baking." Then make sure the label doesn't say hydrogenated, a red flag for trans fats, which are still in some margarines and stick spreads.

From [Reader's Digest - December 2008](#)

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