



CHEKPOINTS

for Fitness Professionals

Does Fat Make You Fat?

No, consuming dietary fats does not mean that you will get fat. In fact, fats and oils are essential to optimal health. Your body needs fats to build cells and manufacture key hormones. Just as with all foods, however, you must consume high-quality fats and oils for your body to effectively use them—remember, “you are what you eat.”

Essential fats: Essential fatty acids (EFAs) are fats that our bodies are unable to manufacture. We must, therefore, acquire them from dietary sources. These fats fall into two groups; omega-3 and omega-6 EFAs. Omega-6 EFAs are readily available in grain products, meats and many commonly used cooking oils such as corn, safflower and sunflower. Omega-3 EFAs are found in leafy green vegetables, oily fish and free-range eggs and comparatively small quantities are available in walnuts and animal meats. The ideal ratio of omega-3:omega-6 fatty acids in your diet is 1:4.

Omega-3 fatty acids are vital to the development of a child's brain and nervous system and for the maintenance and repair of the adult brain and nervous system. Studies in which mice were timed through a maze showed that eating a diet low in omega-3 fatty acids (basically the American diet) led to a *dumbing down* effect when compared to those fed adequate omega-3s. There are a number of behavioral and learning disorders associated with a lack of omega-3 fatty acids in the diet, or an imbalance between omega-3 and omega-6 EFAs, along with several other health issues including: heart attack, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, depression (even among children!), chronic inflammatory disorders and reduced cellular detoxification

Saturated fats and cholesterol: Politically Correct Nutrition, meaning what the “government would have you eat” or what the typical college-educated dietitian would have you eat, is based on the assumption that we should reduce our intake

of fats, particularly saturated fats from animal sources. Fats from animal sources also contain cholesterol, presented as the twin villain of the civilized diet.

Although hydrogenation of fats began in 1912, coronary heart disease was rare in America before 1920—so rare that when a young internist named Paul Dudley White introduced the German electrocardiograph to his colleagues at Harvard University, they advised him to concentrate on a more profitable branch of medicine. The new machine revealed the presence of arterial blockages, thus permitting early diagnosis of coronary heart disease. But in those days, clogged arteries were a medical rarity, and White had to search for patients who could benefit from his new technology. During the next forty years, however, the incidence of coronary heart disease rose dramatically, so much so that by the mid-fifties heart disease was the leading cause of death among Americans. Today, heart disease causes at least 40% of all deaths in the U.S. If, as we have been told, heart disease results from the consumption of saturated fats, one would expect to find a corresponding increase in animal fat in the American diet. Actually, the converse is true. During the sixty-year period from 1910 to 1970, the proportion of traditional animal fat in the American diet declined from 83% to 62%, and butter consumption plummeted from eighteen pounds per person per year to four. During the past eighty years, dietary cholesterol intake has increased only 1%. During the same period, the percentage of dietary vegetable oils in the form of margarine, shortening and refined oils *increased about 400%*, while the consumption of sugar and processed foods *increased about 60%*.⁴⁹

Dietary cholesterol has many functions within the body. It is cholesterol that gives cells stiffness and stability, plays a role in maintaining the health of the intestinal wall and is needed for hormone production. This key fat acts as an antioxidant. In fact high-serum cholesterol levels often indicates that the

body needs cholesterol to protect itself from high levels of altered free-radical-containing fats.

Cholesterol build-up in the arteries is not due to an increase in dietary fat consumption, but rather in consistently elevated insulin levels. This can result from eating excess sugar, stimulants and/or stress. Increased insulin levels can lead to an overproduction of cholesterol by the body. The only way to naturally turn off this cholesterol production is to eat dietary cholesterol (this has the same effect as statin drugs). Unfortunately, most people with this problem are told to go on a low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet, which usually worsens the situation.

The much-maligned saturated fats and cholesterol—which Americans are trying to avoid—are not the cause of modern diseases. If they were, and if the saturated fat/cholesterol myth were true, none of us would be alive today because saturated fat was the primary energy source for most of our ancestors. Studies of North American Indians, Eskimos and other tribes suggest that as much as 80% of their daily caloric intake was from fat, most of which was saturated animal fat.⁴⁹

Fats to Include in Your Diet

- Good sources of quality fat include:
- Olive oil
- Coconut oil/butter
- Palm oil
- Butter (raw is best)
- Ghee (clarified butter)
- Organic, grass-fed animal fats (lard, tallow)
- Fish oil (be careful of source)
- Seeds (especially flax seeds)
- Nuts (raw, organic)
- Avocados

Always choose organic foods for safe fats. Just as humans, animals, fish and plants store toxins in their fat. With the increase use of chemicals, antibiotics and hormones in farming, you want to avoid meats and produce from such sources.

Fats to Avoid

Many processed foods, even those touted as *healthy*, are laden with trans-fatty acids (TFAs). Structurally, trans-fatty acids are closer to plastic than fat. TFA consumption has been linked to heart disease and elevated cholesterol levels.

TFAs are also thought to impair lipoprotein receptors in cells, impairing the body's ability to process low-density cholesterol (LDL), increasing their rate of synthesis and eventually elevating LDL levels in the blood. This is generally considered to be not good for your health. Upon discovering elevated total cholesterol and elevated LDL levels, doctors often tell people to restrict animal fats, butter, cheese, eggs to eat a low-fat diet high in grains and vegetables, and to replace butter with margarine. Unfortunately, this often makes the problem worse.

Margarine is a vegetable oil-based product designed to compete with butter in the marketplace—it's notorious for high levels of TFAs. In an eight-year Harvard Medical School study of 85,000 women, margarine was linked to heart disease.⁴⁶ Dr. Mary Enig, a world-renowned expert on dietary fats, analyzed the TFA content of some 600 foods. She noted that Americans eat between 11 and 28 grams of TFAs a day—or one-fifth their total intake of fat.⁴⁷

How Much Fat Should You Eat

While we must all consume high-quality fats, the amount of fat that is best for you will vary from person to person. I recommend finding out what your Metabolic Type is to best determine how much fat you should include in your diet to optimize your health.

This is only just an introduction to the vast topic of fats and oils. I encourage you to review the references below for more details.

References and Resources

How to Eat, Move and Be Healthy! by Paul Chek
www.westonaprice.org
www.mercola.com
The Schwarzbein Principle by Schwarzbein
Know Your Fats by Mary Enig

Paul Chek is an internationally recognized lecturer and consultant in the fields of corrective and performance exercise.

For more information on the C.H.E.K Institute or to receive a free catalog call **800.552.8789** or int'l 760.477.2620 Also, visit us on the web at: **www.chekinstitute.com**.