

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Steven L. Smith, DC & Stuart deWitt, DC

“Good” and “Bad” Fats

There's been a lot of hype about dietary fat in recent years. And the hype keeps changing. First, we were supposed to avoid fat. Then carbs were the enemy, and fat was OK. Now we hear that some fats are OK, and some aren't. Confused?

Let your doctor at Hickory Chiropractic Clinic clear things up for you. Read on to get the truth behind the fat fads.

Doctors of chiropractic, such as your doctor at Hickory Chiropractic Clinic, offer patients nutritional advice in addition to caring for their spines. Why? Because chiropractors practice holistic — also known as “whole body” — care.

So your doctor at Hickory Chiropractic Clinic wants you to know about a recent study that reveals it's the *type* of fat you eat — rather than the total amount — that matters most (*Asia Pac J Clin Nutr* 2004;13:22).

Fat consumption has skyrocketed in recent decades. And the problem is no longer restricted to just Western countries. According to investigators in Malaysia, “Fat intake worldwide has increased substantially, with East and South-East Asia and China among the

foremost, having doubled and tripled intake [grams per capita, per day] respectively in the past three decades.” (*Asia Pac J Clin Nutr* 2004;13:22.)

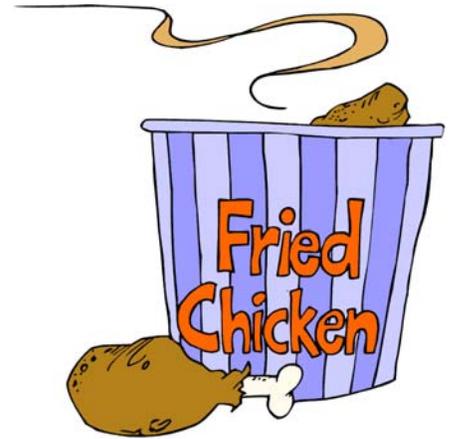
That's why your doctor at Hickory Chiropractic Clinic wants you to learn how to minimize the “bad” and maximize the “good” fats.

Bad Fat No. 1: Trans Fatty Acids

When vegetable oil — which is normally liquid at room temperature — is hardened (hydrogenated) by artificially adding hydrogen, it's transformed into trans fatty acids (TFA). Considered by many experts the worst of the “bad” fats, TFA are difficult for the body to break down. They also hinder the effective use of good fats and, according to scientists, “increase systemic inflammation in healthy persons.” (*Am J Clin Nutr* 2004;80:1521-5.) This inflammation is linked with heart disease, cancer and other disorders.

The really bad news, however, is how widespread the use of TFA is. Unless you see “TFA-free” on ingredients labels, beware. These malicious fatty acids are found in everything from crackers to baked goods, fried foods, dairy products and microwave popcorn.

But don't strain your eyes looking for the words “trans fatty acids” on the ingredients list of your favorite foods:

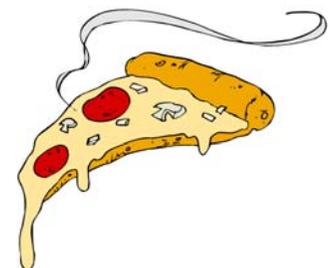


You probably won't find them. Instead, what you'll find is “hydrogenated,” “partially hydrogenated” and “shortening.” All of which are code names for TFA. Many shortenings and margarines are also loaded with TFA.

In fact, one German study revealed that a high margarine intake increased the risk of adult-onset asthma, “while no significant associations were found for the other dietary fatty acids.” The study included 105 adults with newly physician-diagnosed asthma (*Eur J Clin Nutr* 2005;59:8-15).

Bad Fat No. 2: Saturated Fatty Acids

Animal fats, such as those found in meat and dairy products, are referred to as saturated fatty acids (SFA): saturated with the maximum level of hydrogen. These fats are solid at room temperature but liquefy when heated.



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According to researchers at the National Cancer Institute, “Animal fat, especially fat from red meat, is associated with an elevated risk of advanced prostate cancer (*J Natl Cancer Inst* 1993;85:1571-9). Additional studies link animal fat with a vast array of other cancers. Red meat intake may also be tied to Alzheimer’s disease.

SFA “also contributes significantly to total fat intake and markedly raises blood cholesterol concentrations.” (*J Nutr Health Aging* 2001;5:184-7.)

If that’s not enough to turn you away from SFA — a study at the University of Oxford revealed that just **one** SFA-rich meal not only reduces insulin sensitivity immediately after eating, but also has a “carry-over” effect for the next meal (*Br J Nutr* 2002;88:635-40). Insulin insensitivity is directly linked to diabetes.

Because research links a diet high in SFA with a plethora of diseases, “current recommendations are to keep saturated fatty acids, trans fatty acids, and cholesterol intakes as low as possible while consuming a nutritionally adequate diet.” (*Am J Clin Nutr* 2004;80:550.)

Bad Fat No. 3: Fried Fats

Deep-fried foods are packed with artery-clogging fats.

Deep frying sparks chemical changes in fats, which release compounds known as free radicals. These substances trigger a process called oxidation, in which cells first become diseased. Exposure to free radicals ups an individual’s risk of a myriad of ailments, including cancer, heart disease, diabetes and cognitive decline.

Good Fat No. 1: Monounsaturated Fatty Acids

Unlike their saturated and trans-fatty cousins, monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA) have fewer hydrogen atoms and are therefore considered unsaturated. They are usually liquid at room temperature and are actually good for you! People with diets rich in MUFA and low in “bad” fats have signifi-

cantly lower odds of developing cancer and cardiovascular disease.

MUFA can be found in a wide variety of foods, including olives, avocados, all-natural peanut butter (the type you have to stir before using) and almonds. MUFA-rich oils — all of which are plant-based — include canola, olive, sunflower, sesame, corn, palm, soybean, cottonseed and safflower.

According to Swedish researchers, lowering SFA levels and increasing MUFA can alleviate diabetes by making diabetics more sensitive to insulin and speeding the transfer of glucose to energy (*Diabetologia* 2001;44:312-9).

In addition, oleic acid — found in olive oil — reduces the risk of cancer (*Cancer Causes Control* 2004;15:11-20). A high intake of oleic acid was also shown to benefit those with adult-onset asthma (*Eur J Clin Nutr* 2005;59:8-15).

Even better yet — oleic acid is shown to ward off heart disease (*Asia Pac J Clin Nutr* 2004;13:22).

When it comes to lowering the intake of SFA and increasing MUFA, it doesn’t take much to start seeing results. Researchers in Italy say that even “a moderate substitution of saturated fatty acids with monounsaturated fatty acids has beneficial effects.” (*Atherosclerosis* 2003;167:149-58.)

Good Fat No. 2: Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids

Polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) have even fewer hydrogen atoms than MUFA. They are usually liquid at room temperature, good for you and wonderfully easy to incorporate into your diet. Good sources include flaxseeds, walnuts (and other raw nuts), various seeds, leafy greens, salmon, cod, tuna and trout.

“Studies that have demonstrated the protective effects of fatty fish intake against [heart attack] outnumbered those that did not.” (*Asia Pac J Clin Nutr* 2004;13:22.)

Research also suggests that “a diet

high in marine fatty acids (fish oil) may have beneficial effects on inflammatory conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and possibly asthma.” (*Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2002;(3):CD001283.)



A Final Word

Ultimately, the journal cited at the beginning of this **Optimal Health University™** handout sums it up best: “Just as the consumption of a variety of foods is more likely to provide essential nutrients and other biologically beneficial components, the consumption of fat from various foods including fish, nuts, seeds, plant oils and fruits should be encouraged. These and other dietary guidelines, combined with regular physical activity, moderate alcohol consumption and abstinence from smoking, remain the underpinnings of a healthy lifestyle.” (*Asia Pac J Clin Nutr* 2004;13:22.)

All of which mirrors the **chiropractic lifestyle**, a way of life that focuses on preventing health problems — with proper nutrition and regular chiropractic care — rather than merely masking symptoms with medication. Make an appointment today and start living a healthier, happier life!

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