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The Skinny on Fats *Marie Bouvier-Newman*

Are all fats bad for us? Fats, also known as lipids are one of the three macro nutrients along with proteins and carbohydrates that support, build and energize our bodies so we can do the things we do. Twenty to thirty percent of our diets under normal circumstances should come from fats. The typical diet however contains a higher quantity and lower quality of fat than our bodies can handle.

So what are some of the things that fats do for us? Fats make up about fifty percent of our cell membranes, which cover and protect each cell while regulating what goes in and what goes out. Fats enhance our immune system which is responsible for cleaning up debris within the body and destroying invaders. Fats play an important role in a healthy nervous system, cardiovascular system and muscle tone, assist in calcium absorption for healthy bones, and protect us against harmful organisms in our digestive system.

We can't talk about fats without talking briefly about the importance of cholesterol, the most well known of all the fats. Marketing efforts for cholesterol-reducing medicines would have us believe that we should eliminate cholesterol from our bodies but this is far from the truth. Cholesterol is important because it provides strength and support for cell membranes and among other things is used to make stress and sex hormones. It is also used to make bile for digestion of other fats and helps maintain a healthy intestinal lining, which provides protection against autoimmune problems.

If fats do all of these good things, why are we warned to reduce or eliminate them from our diets? Often, the fats in our diets have been damaged as they are processed and packaged. Additionally, animal foods are compromised by dreadful farming practices including an unnatural diet, lack of exercise and fresh air, and antibiotic and steroid use for the purpose of increasing production and income at the expense of quality. Furthermore, it is the combination of excessive consumption of these poor quality fats along with a diet low in fruit and vegetable consumption that is the true problem.

So, what is the bottom line? Which fats should be avoided and which should be included in a healthful diet? There are four types of fats and each one has a story. Trans fats and saturated fats are considered the bad fats with trans fats being particularly unhealthy because they unquestionably increase the risk for disease. Trans fats are liquid oils that have been processed into solids like vegetable shortening and hard stick margarine commonly used in pre-packaged foods like crackers, cookies, chips, and other snacks, as well as French Fries and other deep fried foods.

Saturated fats are primarily found in animal products (meat, dairy and eggs) but also include plant foods such as coconut, palm oil and palm kernel oil. We are learning that small amounts of these fats from high quality sources are okay if we stick to organically grown and cold-pressed vegetable sources and organically raised, free-range, grass-fed

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animal sources. It is best to avoid powdered milk, powdered eggs, anything that has been fried or deep-fried, and all hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils.

The good fats, known as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated actually lower the risk for disease. These fats are the naturally-occurring, traditional ones that haven't been damaged by high heat, refining, processing or other tampering.

Monounsaturated fats provide essential fatty acids for healthy skin and cell development, increase HDL (the good cholesterol) and lower LDL (the bad cholesterol) and may even offer protection against certain cancers like breast and colon cancer. These fats are high in Vitamin E, an immune supporting antioxidant vitamin. Studies have shown that cold pressed extra virgin olive oil, the most popular monounsaturated fat, may help boost immunity and support good health. Avocados and peanut and canola oils are also high in monounsaturated fats and are best un-heated.

Polyunsaturated fats are known as the omega-3 fatty acids. Inclusion of these fats in the diet may help with skin problems, digestive health (especially constipation), heart health, joint health, memory, and brain and nervous system health. Salmon, tuna, sardines, and cod comprise the oily fish sources while flax seeds, flax oil, hemp oil, pumpkin seeds, walnuts, and to some degree, corn, soy, safflower and sunflower oils comprise the vegetable sources. Since there are heavy metal concerns with fish, good tasting and pure fish oil is now available from credible sources.

As usual your grandmother was right when she said all things in moderation. A healthy balance between good fats and a large amount of fruits and vegetables every day will generate the best results for optimal health, so eat well and live long.

BIO:

Marie Bouvier-Newman is the owner of It's My Health Wellcare Collaborative in Pascoag, RI, a center that offers health products, services, information and education. Marie is also a naturopathic student at Clayton College of Natural Health and a Certified Comprehensive Iridologist and board member of the International Iridology Practitioners Association (IIPA). Contact information: 401-710-9701 and www.its-my-health.com

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