

Natural Health News

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EVERGREEN SPA & WELLNESS
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LOW-FAT IS NOT THE ANSWER

Sonja Jewell
NTS, CMT, CCWFN

Evergreen Cottage
146 E. Chapman

Ely, MN 55731

Phone: 218-365-2288

Retail Store Hours

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It all started a few decades ago, when well-known health experts began recommending that people eliminate fat from their diets. A lot of people jumped on the no-fat train because some studies at the time seemed to point to fat as the villain of our modern diet. It soon became obvious to health professionals that completely eliminating fat was not any kind of solution. First of all, most people could not stay on this type of extreme diet for any length of time. Secondly, health problems like cancer, infection, fatigue and depression ran rampant when fat was eliminated. So over time, we have seen a steady trend reintroducing the idea that healthy fats can be a part of a healthy diet. However, many people including some medical doctors are still under the impression that a low-fat diet is healthy, and most people believe cutting out fat is still the best way to lose weight. This is a popular misconception that makes sense on the surface, but when you dig a little deeper the concept begins to unravel. First, it is important to look at what the body actually does when you go on a low-fat diet. The most common belief is when you stop eating fat, your body will burn its own fat for energy. In reality, what really happens is a little more complicated. Here are some common results of a low-fat diet: 1. People who drastically lower their fat intake generally increase their carbohydrate intake. 2. Even complex carbohydrates can cause a rise in blood sugar and insulin levels, especially when they are not consumed with adequate protein and fat. 3. With this sudden influx of excess carbohydrates, there is simply too much sugar in the blood to be used for energy. The rest is converted into fat and cholesterol. 4. Without adequate fat and protein in the diet the body is forced to break down lean body mass to use the nutrients it needs to function. This includes muscle and bone mass. 5. Losing lean body mass shows up as drastic weight loss on the scale at first, but, over time, the body uses less energy because of the loss of muscle. Combined with excess fat storage because of high insulin levels, eventually weight loss on a low-fat diet is almost impossible and you may even start to gain weight. Moreover, a low-fat diet can be downright harmful to your body, especially in the long-term. High insulin levels and the breakdown of lean body mass are not healthy and over time, these factors can cause serious hormone imbalances and can even contribute to health problems like diabetes and heart disease. Cutting out fat is merely swinging the pendulum to another extreme that will have negative side effects. In our society, fats can be good or bad, depending on the source and how they are prepared. Processed fats that have been exposed to heat, light and air can be rancid and oxidized. Polyunsaturated oils like soybean, canola and corn oil are most susceptible to damage. These damaged oils are linked with many health problems such as cancer, premature aging and degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's. Then, we have oils that have been purposely altered, like hydrogenated oils. These are chock-full of trans fats, which is known to sharply increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and many types of cancer. These types of over-processed, damaged fats (such as margarine) should be avoided at all costs. Instead, increase your intake of healthy, unprocessed fats from as natural a source as possible. Organic fats are best, since harmful chemicals and hormones tend to be concentrated and stored in fat.

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THE MANY ROLES OF SATURATED FATS

Saturated fats, such as butter, meat fats, coconut oil and palm oil, tend to be solid at room temperature. According to conventional nutritional dogma, these traditional fats are to blame for most of our modern diseases—heart disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, malfunction of cell membranes and even nervous disorders like multiple sclerosis. However, many scientific studies indicate that it is the processed liquid vegetable oils—which are laden with free radicals formed during processing—and artificially hardened vegetable oils—called *trans fats*—that are the culprits in these modern conditions, not natural saturated fats. Humans need saturated fats because we are warm blooded. Our bodies do not function at room temperature, but at a tropical temperature. Saturated fats provide the appropriate stiffness and structure to our cell membranes and tissues. When we consume a lot of liquid unsaturated oils, our cell membranes do not have structural integrity to function properly, they become too “floppy”, and when we consume a lot of trans fat, which is not as soft as saturated fats at body temperature, our cell membranes become too “stiff”. Contrary to the accepted view, which is not scientifically based, saturated fats do not clog arteries or cause heart disease. In fact, the preferred food for the heart is saturated fat; and saturated fats lower a substance called Lp(a), which is a very accurate marker for proneness to heart disease. Saturated fats play many important roles in the body chemistry. They strengthen the immune system and are involved in inter-cellular communication, which means they protect us against cancer. They help the receptors on our cell membranes work properly, including receptors for insulin, thereby protecting us against diabetes. Saturated fats are required for the nervous system to function properly, and over half the fat in the brain is saturated. Saturated fats also help suppress inflammation. Finally, saturated animal fats carry the vital fat-soluble vitamins A,D and K, which we need in large amounts to be healthy. Human beings have been consuming saturated fats from animal products, milk products and the tropical oils for thousands of years; it is the advent of modern processed vegetable oils that is associated with the epidemic of modern degenerative disease, not the consumption of saturated fats.

~ Wise Traditions in Food, Farming and the Healing Arts (www.westonaprice.org)

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To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and to endure the betrayal of false friends. To appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.

This is to have succeeded.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson



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All of us at the **Evergreen Cottage** and the **Organic Roots Bistro** wish you a happy and healthy holiday season. Thank you so much for your friendship and support!