The Weston A. Price Foundation , The Skinny on Fats

by Mary Enig, PhD, and Sally Fallon

Fats from animal and vegetable sources provide a concentrated source of energy in the diet; they also provide the building blocks for cell membranes and a variety of hormones and hormonelike substances. Fats as part of a meal slow down absorption so that we can go longer without feeling hungry. In addition, they act as carriers for important fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. Dietary fats are needed for the conversion of carotene to vitamin A, for mineral absorption and for a host of other processes.

Politically Correct Nutrition 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.

The Lipid Hypothesis

The theory-called the lipid hypothesis-that there is a direct relationship between the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in the diet and the incidence of coronary heart disease was proposed by a researcher named Ancel Keys in the late 1950's. Numerous subsequent studies have questioned his data and conclusions. Nevertheless, Keys' articles received far more publicity than those presenting alternate views. The vegetable oil and food processing industries, the main beneficiaries of any research that found fault with competing traditional foods, began promoting and funding further research designed to support the lipid hypothesis.

The most well-known advocate of the low-fat diet was Nathan Pritikin. Actually, Pritikin advocated elimination of sugar, white flour and all processed foods from the diet and recommended the use of fresh raw foods, whole grains and a strenuous exercise program; but it was the low-fat aspects of his regime that received the most attention in the media. Adherents found that they lost weight and that their blood cholesterol levels and blood pressure declined. The success of the Pritikin diet was probably due to a number of factors having nothing to do with reduction in dietary fat-weight loss alone, for example, will precipitate a reduction in blood cholesterol levels-but Pritikin soon found that the fat-free diet presented many problems, not the least of which was the fact that people just could not stay on it. Those who possessed enough will power to remain fat-free for any length of time developed a variety of health problems including low energy, difficulty in concentration, depression, weight gain and mineral deficiencies.! Pritikin may have saved himself from heart disease but his low-fat diet did not spare him from cancer. He died, in the prime of life, of suicide when he realized that his Spartan regime was not curing his leukemia. We should not have to die of either heart disease or cancer-or consume a diet that makes us depressed.

When problems with the no-fat regime became apparent, Pritikin introduced a small amount of fat from vegetable sources into his diet-something like 10% of the total caloric intake. Today the Diet Dictocrats advise us to limit fats to 25-30% of the caloric intake, which is about 2 1/2 ounces or 5 tablespoons per day for a diet of 2400 calories. A careful reckoning of fat intake and avoidance of animal fats, they say, is the key to perfect health.

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What Causes Heart Disease?

by Mary Enig, PhD, and Sally Fallon

For almost forty years, the lipid hypothesis or diet-heart idea has dominated medical thinking about heart disease. In broad outlines, this theory proposes that when we eat foods rich in saturated fat and cholesterol, cholesterol is then deposited in our arteries in the form of plaque or atheromas that cause blockages. If the blockages become severe, or if a clot forms that cannot get past the plaque, the heart is starved of blood and a heart attack occurs.

Many distinguished scientists have pointed to serious flaws in this theory, beginning with the fact that heart disease in America has increased during the period when consumption of saturated fat has decreased. "The diet-heart idea," said the distinguished George Mann, "is the greatest scam in the history of medicine. "And the chorus of dissidents continues to grow, even as this increasingly untenable theory has been applied to the whole population, starting with low-fat diets for growing children and mass medication with cholesterollowering drugs for adults.

But if it ain't cholesterol, what causes heart disease? We don't know enough to say for sure but we do have many clues; and although these clues present a complicated picture, it is not beyond the abilities of dedicated scientists to unravel them. Nor is the picture so complex that the consumer cannot make reasonable life-style adjustments to improve his chances.

What Is Heart Disease?
Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) is not a single disease, but a complex of diseases of varied etiology. Some of the recognized causes of heart disease include damage to the heart muscle or valves due to a congenital defect; or to inflammation and damage associated with various viral, bacterial, fungal, rickettsial or parasitic diseases. Rheumatic fever or syphilis can lead to heart disease, as can genetic or autoimmune disorders in which cellular proteins in the heart muscle are deranged or which disrupt enzymes affecting cardiac function.

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