

# 7 Reasons to Eat More Saturated Fat

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Tim Ferriss of *The Four Hour Work Week* has posted an exclusive excerpt from Drs. Michael and Mary Eades' newest book, *The 6-Week Cure for the Middle-Aged Middle*.

The two doctors note that no matter how the story spins from the denizens of the anti-fat camp, one piece of their advice remains staunchly constant: "You should sharply limit your intake of saturated fats." But will saturated fats really increase your risk of heart disease and raise your cholesterol? In a word, no. In fact, humans need them, and here are just a few reasons why:

## 1) Improved cardiovascular risk factors

Saturated fat plays a key role in cardiovascular health. The addition of saturated fat to the diet reduces the levels of a substance called lipoprotein (a) that correlates strongly with risk for heart disease. Research has shown that when women diet, those eating the greatest percentage of the total fat in their diets as saturated fat, lose the most weight.

## 2) Stronger bones

Saturated fat is required for calcium to be effectively incorporated into bone. According to one of the foremost research experts in dietary fats and human health, Dr. Mary Enig, Ph.D., there's a case to be made for having as much as 50 percent of the fats in your diet as saturated fats for this reason.

## 3) Improved liver health

Saturated fat has been shown to protect the liver from alcohol and medications, including acetaminophen and other drugs commonly used for pain and arthritis.

## 4) Healthy lungs

For proper function, the airspaces of the lungs have to be coated with a thin layer of lung surfactant. The fat content of lung surfactant is 100 percent saturated fatty acids. Replacement of these critical fats by other types of fat makes faulty surfactant and potentially causes breathing difficulties.

## 5) Healthy brain

Your brain is mainly made of fat and cholesterol. The lion's share of the fatty acids in the brain are actually saturated. A diet that skimps on healthy saturated fats robs your brain of the raw materials it needs to function optimally.

## 6) Proper nerve signaling

Certain saturated fats, particularly those found in butter, lard, coconut oil, and palm oil, function directly as signaling messengers that influence metabolism, including such critical jobs as the appropriate release of insulin.

## 7) Strong immune system

Saturated fats found in butter and coconut oil (myristic acid and lauric acid) play key roles in immune health. Loss of sufficient saturated fatty acids in white blood cells hampers their ability to recognize and destroy foreign invaders, such as viruses, bacteria, and fungi.

#### Sources:

• [Four Hour Work Week September 6, 2009](#)



Dr. Mercola's Comments:

A misguided fallacy that persists to this day is the belief that saturated fat will increase your risk of heart disease and heart attacks. This is simply another myth that has been harming your health for the last 30 or 40 years.

The truth is, saturated fats from animal and vegetable sources provide a concentrated source of energy in your diet, and they provide the building blocks for cell membranes and a variety of hormones and hormone-like substances.

When you eat saturated fats as part of your meal, they slow down absorption so that you 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 also needed for the conversion of carotene to vitamin A, for mineral absorption, and for a host of other biological processes.

Saturated fats are also:

- The preferred fuel for your heart, and also used as a source of fuel during energy expenditure
- Useful antiviral agents (caprylic acid)
- Effective as an anticaries, antiplaque and anti-fungal agent (lauric acid)
- Useful to actually lower cholesterol levels (palmitic and stearic acids)
- Modulators of genetic regulation and prevent cancer (butyric acid)

If the fact that saturated fats are actually good for you sounds conflicting, at least in terms of what is repeated by public health agencies, I urge you to read Mary Enig and Sally Fallon's classic article [The Truth About Saturated Fats](#).

It is one of the best and most thorough introductions to this topic, and you can read through it in just a few minutes.

#### Have You Heard of the Lipid Hypothesis?

If not by name, you've certainly heard of the concept behind the "lipid hypothesis," and that is that dietary fat causes heart disease.

This flawed theory was largely spread by Ancel Keys, a diet researcher for whom military K-rations are named, and it was because of the lipid hypothesis that Americans were soon encouraged to substitute vegetable-based fats for animal fats, and to avoid red meat completely.

However, when Keys published his analysis that claimed to prove the link between dietary fats and coronary heart disease, he selectively analyzed information from only six countries to prove his correlation, rather than comparing all the data available at the time -- from 22 countries.

As a result of this "cherry-picked" data, government health organizations began bombarding the public with advice that has contributed to the diabetes and obesity epidemics going on today: eat a low-fat diet.

Of course, as Americans cut out nutritious animal fats from their diets, they were left hungry. So they began eating more processed grains, more vegetable oils, and more high-fructose corn syrup, all of which are nutritional disasters.

#### What about the Studies That DO Show a Link between Fat and Heart Disease?

Keys believed that dietary fat was causing heart disease in Americans back in the 1950s, and he soon got others to jump on the bandwagon.

Even the American Heart Association, which concluded in 1957 that "the evidence that dietary fat correlates with heart disease *does not stand up to critical examination*," changed its position in 1960.

Why? Because Keys was on the committee issuing a new report that a low-fat diet was advised for people at risk of heart disease. Sadly, the theory continued to be accepted as nutritional wisdom, even though clinical trials

found no connection.

There are, however, some studies that have found a link between fat and heart disease, and they are often used by saturated fat opponents to "prove" their case.

The problem lies in the fact that most of these studies make no effort to differentiate between saturated fat and trans fat. I believe this is the missing link.

If researchers were to more carefully evaluate the risks of heart disease by measuring the levels of trans and saturated fat, I believe they would find a completely different story.

Trans fat is known to increase your LDL levels, or "bad" cholesterol, while lowering your levels of HDL, known as "good" cholesterol, which is the complete opposite of what you need in order to maintain good heart health. It can also cause major clogging of arteries, type 2 diabetes and other serious health problems.

On the other hand, your body needs some amount of saturated fat to stay healthy. It is virtually impossible to achieve a nutritionally adequate diet that has no saturated fat. What you don't need, however, are trans fats.

Further, there are some people who do well with a low-saturated-fat diet -- the one-third who are carb nutritional types. Even then, however, some animal fats are necessary and healthy, and two-thirds of people actually require moderate- to high-saturated-fat diets to thrive.

#### Healthy Sources of Saturated Fats to Add to Your Diet

Saturated fat is not the root of all evil ... and it is NOT to blame for the modern disease epidemics facing Americans. Saturated fat is actually an incredibly healthy, nourishing and all natural fat that humans have been thriving on for generations. Again, as Fallon and Enig point out:

- Saturated fatty acids constitute at least 50 percent of your cell membranes. They are what gives your cells necessary stiffness and integrity.
- They play a vital role in the health of your bones. For calcium to be effectively incorporated into your skeletal structure, at least 50 percent of

your dietary fats should be saturated.

- They lower Lp(a), a substance in your blood that indicates proneness to heart disease.
- They protect your liver from alcohol and other toxins, such as Tylenol and other drugs.
- They enhance your immune system.
- They are needed for the proper utilization of essential fatty acids. Elongated omega-3 fats are better retained in your tissues when your diet is rich in saturated fats.
- Saturated 18-carbon stearic acid and 16-carbon palmitic acid are the preferred foods for your heart, which is why the fat around your heart muscle is highly saturated. Your heart draws on this reserve of fat in times of stress.
- Short- and medium-chain saturated fatty acids have important antimicrobial properties. They protect you against harmful microorganisms in your digestive tract.

So please do not shun saturated fats from your diet. If you'd like to get the most tailored information about which fats, and how much of them, to include in your optimal diet, first find out your nutritional type. Then, make sure your meals include some of these delicious and healthy sources of saturated fat:

- Grass-fed organic beef and beef fat
- Naturally raised lamb
- Organic raw dairy products (butter, cheese, milk, cream)
- Coconut oil

Related Links:

- [The Truth About Saturated Fat](#)
- [Diet and Fat: A Severe Case of Mistaken Consensus](#)

**Surprise -- Saturated Fat Really Is Good For You**

Dr. Mercola is the founder of the world's most visited natural health web site, [Mercola.com](http://Mercola.com). You can learn the hazardous side effects of OTC Remedies by getting a FREE copy of his latest special report [The Dangers of Over the Counter Remedies](#) by going to his [Report Page](#).



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