

Different Drummer Acupuncture

An Occasional Newsletter



Fats Я Us

Maybe it was the inspiration of attending my 30th high school reunion or the realization that doing a marathon would be so much easier if I were 10 pounds lighter. Whatever the case, I want to share with you the importance of fats.

Not All Fats Are Evil

Like the Chinese theory of yin and yang there are both good and bad qualities in fats. A lack of fat can cause liver disease, dermatitis, and neurological problems. Fats help in growth and development and are a great source of energy. They insulate the body, protect cells and organs, and act as a solvent for certain vitamins. Specific fats have been known to help with menopausal symptoms and heart disease. They also make foods taste good. And, as Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary says, "When properly distributed, fat gives a pleasing contour to the body."

The American Diet

Unfortunately too much of a good thing can be bad and that's certainly been the case with fat and the American diet. Many sources say we should get no more than 30% of our calories from fat, although some say 20% would be healthier. Fats have been linked to heart disease, breast and other cancers, diabetes, and obesity.

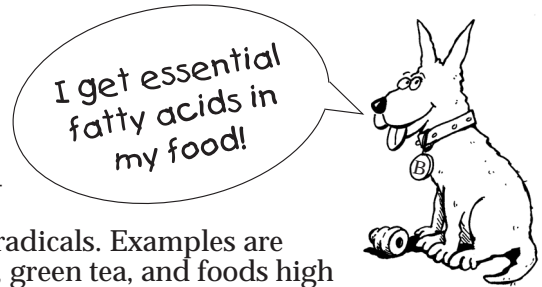
In Fast Food Nation, Eric Schlosser says that 44 million American adults are obese. Super size has become the norm. He notes that McDonald's Super Size Fries have 610 calories with 261 coming from saturated fat. In a 2,000 calorie diet, that is almost half of the recommended daily fat intake.

Buzz Words

Low fat, no fat, saturated fat, polyunsaturated fat, hydrogenated oil, omega 3 fats, trans fatty acids, the list of buzz words goes on and on. What's a person to do? Instead of preaching about fats, I want to educate you so you'll understand fats a little better and make more informed choices. I hope you find the list educational.

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Antioxidants—

Substances that neutralize free radicals. Examples are garlic, turmeric, green tea, and foods high in flavonoids like red wine, apples, blueberries, onions, and soy products. Vitamins A, C, and E are also good antioxidants.

Cholesterol—A type of alcohol found in our cells, it is essential for brain and nerve function as well as the metabolism of steroidal hormones. Two types of cholesterol are low-density lipoproteins (LDL) and high-density lipoproteins (HDL). LDLs are the main transporters of cholesterol and implicated in clogging the arteries. HDLs on the other hand take cholesterol back to the liver where it can be broken down and removed from the body.

Essential Fatty Acids—Fats that are essential for growth and development and can't be synthesized in the body. Two of the key essential fatty acids are omega 6 and omega 3 fats.

Fatty Acids—The building blocks of fats. There are three major categories of fatty acids: saturated, polyunsaturated, and monounsaturated. These classifications are based on the number of hydrogen atoms in the chemical makeup.

Free Radicals—A molecule that has an unpaired electron. This makes the molecule unstable and encourages chemical reactions. They are naturally present in our body and are not inherently bad, some destroy viruses and bacteria while others help in the production of hormones and enzymes. Pollutants, exposure to radiation (sun or x-rays), diets high in fat, and extreme exercise can increase free radical levels in our bodies. With too many free radicals, however, all kinds of nasty things can happen; the immune system is compromised, which can lead to cancer and other diseases, premature aging can occur as the free radicals destroy cell membranes, and calcium levels can be affected.

Hydrogenated or Partially Hydrogenated Oils—See trans-fatty acids.

Monounsaturated Fatty Acids—Fats that are found in vegetable and nut oils. Olive, peanut, and canola oil are good examples. They appear to slightly reduce levels of LDLs (bad cholesterol) and may have cancer-fighting properties.



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Omega 3 Fats—Essential fatty acids found in fresh deepwater fish, fish oil, and vegetable oils such as canola, flaxseed, and walnut. One of the best fish sources is salmon—a 4-oz. serving has approx. 3,600 mg of omega 3 while 4 ozs. of cod has 300 mg.

Omega 6 Fats—Essential fatty acids found in raw nuts, seeds, legumes, and unsaturated vegetable oils like borage, primrose, sesame, and soybean oil. These oils should not be heated in processing or cooking; they form free radicals.

Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids—These fats are found in corn, soybean, safflower, flax seed, and sunflower oils and nuts, seeds, whole grains, and some fish and animals. Active wild animals have higher levels of these fatty acids than domestic animals. There is evidence that these fats lower total cholesterol, both good (HDL) and bad (LDL) cholesterol. Because of their chemical makeup these fats are highly unstable and susceptible to oxidation thereby forming free radicals, which are known to be cancer causing. These fats are best stored away from light, air, and heat, i.e. the freezer or refrigerator.

Saturated Fatty Acids

Mostly from animal products such as dairy, meat, and some vegetable products including coconut oil, palm kernel oil, and vegetable shortening. These fats are converted to cholesterol and excess consumption is implicated in cardiovascular disease. These fats are usually solid at room temperature.

Trans-Fatty Acids

A process where polyunsaturated oils are altered through hydrogenation so that they are solid at room temperature. Margarine is a prime example, but also fats contained in store bought cookies, crackers, etc. Look for the words hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil. This process makes these fats highly saturated, but through intense lobbying, foods that contain trans-fatty acids don't have to count these fats as saturated fats on the label. These altered fats are thought to raise LDL (bad cholesterol) and lower HDL (good cholesterol).

Triglycerides

A type of fat found in the blood stream. High levels are implicated in atherosclerosis.

Menopause—Followup

JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association) published a study saying that hormone replacement therapy should not be used by healthy postmenopausal women. The study was actually stopped three years before schedule because of the increased risk for breast cancer and heart disease. See www.jama.com for the full study and editorial comment.

Chinese herbs have been used for thousands of years to combat some of the unpleasant symptoms associated with menopause. Give me a call if you would like some more information.



Marcia Mueller
Lic. Acupuncturist

About Different Drummer Acupuncture—From Bandit's Perspective
Mom loves ice cream. When she takes me to Baskin and Robbins, she thinks I'm satisfied with a just a cone—no ice cream just a cone! What kind of a mother is she, anyway? Well, she competes as a race walker in road races, relays and marathons and is a proponent of cross training (she was injured from over training), so she swims, weightlifts and does yoga. Often, I like to take her for long walks to the park. Athletes are a large part of her practice. Acupuncture is a midlife career change for her. Previously Marcia worked at Nike. During this time she used acupuncture for a back injury and from personal experience discovered the power in this ancient medicine. She is a graduate of Lewis and Clark College and the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine where she received a Masters degree in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. Marcia has been in practice since 1998.