

Fats in the Diet

1. AVOID REDUCED-FAT PRODUCTS

Our media-induced fear of fat in this country has created a market for over 15,000 reduced-fat products! These products completely fail to live up to their claims, not to mention that they don't even taste good. Have you ever had a fat-free product that tasted better than the original? The fact is that when they remove the fat, they have to put something back in, and that "something" is usually more sugar, sodium, artificial flavorings, binding agents and other chemicals.

Don't be afraid to eat real food. The closer to nature, the better it is for you. Choose foods in their whole state. Do your best to avoid processed, prepackaged foods, especially those that are reduced-fat products.

2. REPLACE MARGARINE WITH BUTTER

We have been told to eat margarine because butter raises our cholesterol and is bad for our heart. The truth is that margarine eaters have twice the rate of heart disease as butter eaters (Nutrition Week 3/22/91 21:12).

We've also been told that saturated fats, the kind that are in butter, clog the arteries. But according to a study published in The Lancet (1994 344:1195), the fatty acids found in artery clogs are mostly unsaturated, not saturated, as we have been led to believe.

Butter is a natural fat, made from cream. Margarine is an artificial concoction of chemicals. Not only does butter taste better, but it's good for you. Butter is a source of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K, and important trace minerals magnesium, zinc, chromium, selenium and iodine. Purchase organic butter produced without the use of hormones, steroids and antibiotics. Raw butter from pasture-fed cows is even better.

3. REPLACE PROCESSED VEGETABLE OILS WITH TRADITIONAL FATS

For many years the media have told us to replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats, like those from vegetable oils. This advice does more harm than good. In the process of producing vegetable oils, toxic chemicals and high temperatures are used to extract the oil from the seed or bean. In this process virtually all of the nutritional value has been destroyed, not to mention that the high temperatures turn the oil rancid before you even bring it home.

Even worse, most of the vegetable oils that end up in packaged foods have been partially hydrogenated, a process that rearranges the fatty acid molecules, turning them from the natural cis configuration into trans fats, most of which do not exist in nature. Not only are trans fats difficult to digest, they have been implicated as a cause of both cancer and heart disease.

According to Dr. John Lee, MD, of California, "Trans fatty acids enter our metabolic processes but are defective for our bodily uses. Our cell membranes, our hormone synthesis, our immune system, our ability to deal with inflammation and to heal, and many, many, other vital systems all become defective when trans fatty acids substitute for the health-giving cis fatty acids. Unknowingly we are poisoning ourselves."

The best fats for us to eat are those that generations thrived on before Quaker and Nabisco became household names. These traditional fats include butter, lard, tallow, olive oil, coconut and palm oils—fats that you don't hear about too often on TV!

SOURCES

BUTTER

Butter is a rich source of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K. The saturated fat in butter actually enhances our immune function, protects the liver from toxins, provides nourishment for the heart in

times of stress, gives stiffness and integrity to our cell membranes, and aids in the proper utilization of omega-3 essential fatty acids. Butter will add extra nutrients and flavor to your vegetables, whole grain breads, and sautéed dishes.

LARD

Lard is a traditional fat, the mention of which causes us moderns to cringe. Yet lard is a healthy, natural fat. Lard is rendered fat from pork and is mostly monounsaturated. Lard can be a wonderful source of vitamin D. Traditionally, lard has been used and enjoyed for pastries and frying potatoes—until the vegetable oil industry took over. Don't be afraid to experiment with lard in your kitchen, it will add lots of flavor to your food.

On a side note, I worked with a client from Mexico who was here visiting her daughter over the summer. The mother was 85 years old, very strong and healthy, and had not one wrinkle on her beautiful face. Her skin was incredible! It was so soft and silky, not at all dry, scaly or wrinkly like the skin I'm so used to seeing with most of my clients. I just had to ask her what kind of fats she eats. Her daughter translated my question to her mother and then replied, "She said she eats mostly lard. I can't believe it! I keep telling her that's not good for her, but she just won't listen!" Us silly Americans!

TALLOW

Tallow is used in traditional cultures for its health benefits. Tallow is rendered beef fat and is a very stable fat for frying.