

GOOD/BAD FATS

February is **HEART** month. Instead of covering total heart care, I thought I would concentrate on one aspect—utilization of FATS.

Conventional wisdom on dietary fats has changed over the years. It used to be that all fats were bad; of course they are all high in calories still. Years of research have changed our way of thinking. We now know that all fats are not created equal—that there are good fats and bad fats.

UNSATURATED FATS (GOOD FATS): There are two families—***Polyunsaturated (soybean, safflower, fatty fish and nut and seed oil) and Monounsaturated (some nut oils and olive oil)***. All of these help fight the very diseases that consuming excess fat was said to cause.

Monounsaturated fats help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol while boosting HDL (good cholesterol).

Polyunsaturated fats are thought to help lower total and bad cholesterol. Some research suggests that these fats are less stable and may reduce good cholesterol. They are however, a good source of an essential fatty acid, Omega 3, contained in cold-water fish, nuts, oils, seeds and dark leafy greens. Omega-3 cannot be manufactured by our bodies, so eating these foods is the only way to obtain it. Omega-3 is thought to lower blood pressure, combat LDL, fight inflammation and protect the brain and nervous system.

Most cooking oils are unsaturated fats. When you choose one; look at the ratio of mono to poly unsaturated fats. ***Two oils have high levels of Mono—canola and olive oil.*** You should have these in your pantry.

Always remember all oils are 100 percent fat and are around 120 calories per tablespoon. “Light” oil refers only to the color of the oil, not fat or calorie content.

SATURATED FATS (BAD FATS): These fats *are solid at room temperature*. They are artery-clogging fats from meat and dairy products. Animal fats do contain necessary vitamins and minerals. Studies show that saturated fats directly raise total and LDL cholesterol. People who have genetically high cholesterol levels may need to eliminate most of these fats from their diet and substitute high protein foods such as, beans and quinoa. Substituting high carbohydrate foods has proven to be a factor in the rise of obesity.

Lastly, processed foods such as cookies, pies, crackers, cakes, fast foods and commercially fried/baked foods usually have a high content of saturated fats. Label reading is a necessity if you fight elevated cholesterol levels.

Healthy Eating!! Keep with lots of color and lots of fruits and vegetables.