

NEW GUIDELINES ON FAT INTAKE TO REDUCE RISK OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE BY AHA

The American Heart Association (AHA) recently released updated recommendations for the types of fat Americans consume to reduce risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD), the leading global cause of death worldwide. According to 2014 United States statistics, 1 of every 3 deaths was due to heart disease, stroke, or other types of cardiovascular disease.

Since 1961, the AHA has recommended reducing dietary intake of saturated fat, the type of fat found in meat, cheese, pork, butter, and milk and yogurt made from whole or reduced fat milk. The purpose of this AHA presidential advisory on dietary fats and CVD is to review and discuss the scientific evidence, including the most recent studies, on the effects of saturated fat and replacing saturated fat with other types of fat or carbohydrate. Although there has been much popular discussion recently about potential health benefits of some types of saturated fat, this report concludes that solid scientific research continues to show that replacing saturated fat with polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fat lowers risk of CVD.

A high saturated fat diet is well-known to increase levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, a leading cause of atherosclerosis, where plaque builds up inside arteries, making the arteries narrow and hard. Reducing saturated fat intake helps reduce and even reverse atherosclerosis. Current guidelines recommend reducing saturated fat to 5-6% of total calories for people with elevated LDL levels, and to <10% of calories from saturated fat for the general American population. The average saturated fat intake in the US is 11% of total calories, and only about 5% of adults consume the recommended <10%.

—By Lynn Grieger, RDN, CDE, CPT, CHWC

References:

Sacks FM, Lichtenstein AH, Wu JHY, Appel LJ, Creager MA, Kris-Etherton PM, Miller M, Rimm EB, Rudel LL, Robinson JG, Stone NJ, Van Horn LV; American Heart Association. Dietary Fats and Cardiovascular Disease: A Presidential Advisory From the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2017 Jul 18;136(3):e1-e23.

American Heart Association. Dietary Fats. <https://healthyforgood.heart.org/Eat-smart/Articles/Dietary-Fats> Last updated 3-24-17. Accessed 7-22-17.

Summary:

1. Randomized controlled trials that **replaced some saturated fat with polyunsaturated vegetable oil** reduced CVD by approximately 30%.
2. Observational studies showed that **decreasing saturated fat and replacing it with polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fat is associated with lower rates of CVD** and of other major causes of death and mortality.
3. **Replacing saturated fat with refined carbohydrate and sugar did not reduce CVD.** Evidence from observational studies, however, shows that replacing saturated fat with carbohydrate from whole grains lowers risk of CVD.
4. **The total amount of fat consumed isn't as important as the types of fat.**
5. **Reducing saturated fat should occur within an overall healthy eating pattern such as the DASH or Mediterranean diet** that emphasizes including plenty of vegetables, fruit, and whole grains