

**On Nutrition: by Helayne Waldman, Ed.D., N.E.**

# Time for an Oil Change?

Rumor has it that fat's the worst thing you can put in your body. No, rumor has it that fat can be good for you. With all this equivocation, what's a rational person to think?

Here's the secret: it all depends on the *type* of fat you eat. It's true -- bad fats will make you old and sick in the blink of an eye. They'll not only wind up in your arteries, they're literally a gastronomic weapon of mass destruction--setting off a host of inflammatory reactions, gumming up delicate cell membranes and making those cells in a word, dysfunctional.

## How hydrogenation gave fat a bad name

It all began about 50 years ago, when processed foods started coming into their own as a mainstay of the American diet. During those years, food manufacturers started looking for a way to preserve the shelf life of processed foods, and supermarket fats and oils. Very quickly, genuine fats became factory fats. That is, they became hydrogenated trans fats, a new "fake" fat that was completely foreign to the human body. Why did we turn real fats into fake fats? Well consider this.... Baked goods made with shortening or margarine will last 4-5 times longer than those made with butter. Longer shelf life means larger profit.

So what happens when you actually eat this stuff?

Because trans fats are similar in chemical composition to real fats, your body believes they are real, and uses them in all the places that real fats are designed to go -- especially, the precious cell membrane. In other words, as diet



guru Sally Fallon points out, your cells become partially hydrogenated!

Trans fats are lurking in just about all fast foods, processed foods, chips and bakery items. Run, don't walk, as quickly as possible from these monsters.

## Now, the good news: good fats are fabulous!

On the other hand, we can't live without fat. Look at one of your friends on a "fat free" diet and you'll undoubtedly notice a certain sallowness to her complexion, a visible lack of vitality, and perhaps even some short circuits in her thinking.

That's because healthy fats are critical to the structure of nerves, muscle and blood vessels -- and functionally, fat is as important as proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals.

For example --Did you know that every cell in our body is enclosed in a protective membrane composed primarily of fats? These fats are largely responsible for the cell's welfare, and for the process of normal cell division. But wait, there's much more.

- One type of essential fatty acid called DHA makes up approximately half of all brain

matter, plus a significant proportion of the retina of our eyes.

- Healthy fats also allow us to assimilate and use calcium, Vitamin A, D, K and E.
- Fats with antioxidant activity like olive oil help provide critical protection against cancer and heart disease.
- Fats also hold the key when it comes to controlling inflammation. The type of fats you eat actually functions like a switch to help determine whether the fire of inflammation is turned on.... Or off.
- Healthy fats in moderation can be a key component of a successful weight loss program. That's right -- believe it or not, real fat is the best stabilizer of blood sugar around. Fabulous fats help control appetite because they're absorbed into your bloodstream more slowly. This keeps you feeling full longer and keeps those sugar cravings under control.

## So where do we get healthy fat?

If trans fats are the Darth Vaders of the world of fats and oils, healthy fats are it heroes.

One class of healthy fats, the monounsaturates, are abundant in olive oil, macadamia nut oil and avocados, and are a mainstay of what many of us know as the "Mediterranean diet."

Another category of fats that are critically missing in most American diets are the Omega 3 fatty acids. These are the fats

getting medical and media accolades recently– the fats found in salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines, walnuts, flax and hemp seeds, and an obscure leafy green called purslane. They're also abundant in pasture-raised (grass fed) animal products like those from Niman Ranch and other traditional farms. Omega 3s have so impressed the medical community that they've been under intense scrutiny for the past few years for the role they play in helping to control blood pressure and cholesterol, inflammatory conditions like arthritis -- even

dementia in seniors and ADD in children.

So stock up on these fabulous fat-containing delicacies without guilt! If you're like many, you may also choose to add additional Omega 3 fatty acids to your diet in the form of supplements. This is fine too – just make sure that the brand you buy is guaranteed to be free of heavy metals, PCBs, solvents and other toxins. For recommendations, drop me a note.

However you do it, it's time to get those nasty trans fats out of your

life and welcome the fabulous fats with open arms. In other words... it's time for an oil change!

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