

Fats - details listed
below



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Most people today are very conscious about their consumption of fats. It is because we have the notion that intake of fats would cause harm to our health, especially in our cardiovascular system. However, we should be aware that not all kinds of fats increase risk for cardiovascular disease like atherosclerosis or stroke. Some kinds of fats are actually beneficial to our health. Having the knowledge of the kind of fat and its relationship to our cardiovascular system can make us mindful and have the proper food choices. Fats are an essential biomolecules that is needed in our body. It is actually a major component of the cell membrane and is involved in many activities of our body especially in the metabolism. The major kinds of fat that are present in our diet include the monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, saturated and trans fatty acids. These kinds of fats are classified based on the differences in their chemical structure which also determines if these fats have a “good” or “bad” effect on the cardiovascular system. Before presenting the good and bad fats, let's first discuss the implication of cholesterol which greatly affects our cardiovascular health. Cholesterol is a steroid alcohol which performs many functions in the body. It is an important component of cell membranes which regulates its fluidity. It is also a precursor for important substances in the body like bile acids, steroid hormones, and vitamin D. However, there are good or bad types of cholesterol (Jonas, 2002). The bad cholesterol includes the LDLs (low density lipoprotein) while the good cholesterol includes the HDLs (high density lipoprotein). The HDL helps keep the LDL from getting deposited into the blood vessel walls. Moreover, high level of HDL and low levels of LDL may help protect us from heart attack and stroke, while low levels of HDL and high levels of LDL have been shown to increase the risk of heart disease.

Cholesterol is actually synthesized in the body but can also be increased in levels by certain foods. Foods that may increase HDL levels include those that contain omega-3 fatty acids (such as salmon, tuna and sardines), walnuts and garlic. On the other hand, foods that may increase LDL levels include dairy products, shortening, lard, commercially prepared pastries. The fats that are considered to have a “ bad” effect includes the saturated and trans fatty acids. These have serious consequences on health because these are the fats have the tendency to be deposited on blood vessels which could clog blood flow. These also contribute to increased level of LDL and decreased level of HDL (Donatelle, 2005). Moreover, these fats can lead to hypertension. These would result to cardiovascular disease like atherosclerosis, plaque formation of even stroke. Saturated fats are found in most animal products such as butter, lard, cream and whole milk, meats and some plant oils. On the other hand, trans fats are found in candy, cakes, pies, cookies, pastries, crackers, biscuits, cereals, deep fried foods, fatty meat from beef and sheep margarine and some salad dressings. On the other hand, the “ good” fat includes those that are classified as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated. These are the fat that lowers high LDL levels and increases HDL levels (Donatelle, 2005). It also lowers the risk of heart diseases and atherosclerosis (clogged arteries). Monounsaturated fats are found in sunflower, sesame, soy, corn and sunflower-seed oils, nuts and seeds. On the other hand, polyunsaturated fats are found in olive, canola and peanut oils, and avocados. The omega-3 fatty acid is a type of polyunsaturated fat can also help lower blood pressure, decrease triglyceride levels and promote healthy cardiovascular system (Jonas, 2002). It is found in most fishes like salmon, tuna, sardine, trout, herring and anchovies.

References: Donatelle, R. J. 2005. Health, the Basics: 6th edition. San Francisco: Pearson Education
Jonas, A. 2002. Biochemistry of Lipids, Lipoproteins and Membranes: 4th edition. Elsevier Science