

Hold the Fries, Please

by Francisco Contreras, M.D.

Question: I try to watch what I eat, but occasionally I treat myself to some fast food. What do you think about the new “healthy” french fries being served by some food chains?

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Answer: I think it is important to pray before meals, not just for a blessing but also for protection from the things we choose to eat. In fact, we should pray, “And lead us not into fast-food restaurants and deliver us from french fries”!

Most restaurants use partially hydrogenated oils to fry their goodies because these oils produce crisp, good-tasting food at a low cost. But consumers are paying a steep price with their health.

Swedish researchers report that fried or baked foods high in starch—especially french fries—contain acrylamide, a chemical that increases the risk of cancer.

Also, overwhelming data has shown that hydrogenated oils contain a hydrogen bond called “trans” that seems to raise bad cholesterol (LDL) and lower good cholesterol (HDL).

That alone is a one-two punch for the hearts of the many, many millions of

customers who dine on fast food every day.

I certainly agree that reducing trans fatty acids by 48 percent and increasing polyunsaturated fats by 167 percent—a move announced recently by McDonald's—is a step in the right direction. But it by no means upgrades fried foods to the list of healthy treats.

The fast-food industry is trying to stay one step ahead of the Food and Drug Administration. The federal agency has new regulations in the works that could force restaurants to label foods that contain trans fatty acids.

It's a move that would most certainly benefit the informed consumer, whose numbers are growing every day.

If you think the use of a more healthful cooking oil—a changeover currently being implemented by many restaurants—will make fried foods more healthy, understand this: The caloric content is the same, and a new oil will do nothing to trim America's growing waistline.

I urge you to consider your body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 6:19). Remember the Bible's cautionary words: “You may say, ‘I am allowed to do anything.’ But I reply, ‘Not everything is good for you’” (1 Cor. 6:12, NLT).

Eat lots of God's fast food—the fruits and vegetables—and consume them as closely as you can to the form in which He has given them to

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