

Is There Really a Link Between Heart Disease and Saturated Fat?

The very common advice to people suffering from heart disease has always been to avoid the overconsumption of saturated fat. Such saturated fats can be found in red meat, butter and cheese.

Saturated fats have the ability to deposit in arteries and clog them; this is why numerous health-conscious people in the U.S. prefer healthier fats, such as canola oil as opposed to butter.

However, the results of this study are not shocking for people who are conscious of modern nutrition. It is important to know that there is no solid evidence to attest to the fact that saturated fat can directly cause heart disease. People usually believe this theory because nutritional strategies over the last decade have been directly affected by bias, wrong information, ambition and politics.

'Saturated Fat Causes Heart Disease'—Who Came Up With This Idea?

In 1950, a scientist at the University of Minnesota, Ancel Benjamin Keys, rose to instant fame and was also featured on the cover of *Time* magazine after declaring his idea that the consumption of saturated fat increases cholesterol, which in turn results in heart attacks. Since Keys was the director of the largest nutritional body, he could easily flaunt his idea among people. He performed the study named as "Seven Countries" on more than 13,000 men from the U.S., Europe and Japan. Keys concluded that instead of aging, poor nutrition is the major cause of heart disease in people.

What Did Critics Say?

Critics found that Keys desecrated various scientific rules during the study to draw this conclusion. For instance, he chose countries like Italy, Finland and Yugoslavia, where people could easily be convinced. However, countries such as West Germany, France, Switzerland and Sweden, where people consume lots of fat but still remain healthier, were not included in the study.

The study was conducted on islanders and peasants from Crete who tilled their fields and consumed less cheese and meat. Also, Keys visited Crete after World War II and examined the diet of islanders during Lent, when they stopped consuming cheese and meat. Therefore, Keys could not correctly analyze their consumption of saturated fat.

Because of the difficulties with the surveys, he took into account only the data obtained from a few dozen people. This figure was much lower than the 655 he had initially selected to study. These flaws in his study were exposed later, in the year 2002, when a scientist examined the work conducted on Crete. However, until then, it was too late and his misinterpretation was already adopted internationally.

There were many others studies that followed later on. There were more than six large trials that pitted a diet rich in soybean and corn against one with more animal fats. However, those trials had issues with their methodology.

In many studies, there was no restriction on smoking, while in others the participants were permitted to move in and out of the research group during the study. Thus, the results obtained were not trustworthy. Well, nothing could be done until then, since a lot of money was spent to prove Key's assumptions. People were so much in favor of Keys' idea that they started to think it was true.

In 1977, a nutrition professor at Harvard, Mark Hegsted,

convinced the U.S. Senate to recommend the Keys diet; he claimed Americans should change to Keys' diet because of the advantages it contained. He further stated that the Keys diet is safe to consume and there are no identified risks. However, there were many scientists who warned regarding the unintentional result of the Keys diet; today we are facing with a few of these.

What Are the Consequences of Consuming a Low-Fat Diet?

It has been found that reducing the amount of fat results in the consumption of more carbohydrates, and therefore the consumption of carbohydrates has increased by 25 percent since 1970. However, according to the latest government data, consumption of saturated fat has been reduced by 11 percent.

In spite of consuming cheese, meat and eggs, we are consuming more fruit, grains, pasta and starchy potatoes. By reducing the amount of fat in our diet, we are filling our body with carbohydrate-based foods.

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