



The Saturated Fats Debate

Many years of dietary advice suggested saturated fat was harmful and in recent years that idea has begun to evolve. Several studies suggest that eating diets high in saturated fat do not raise the risk of heart disease, with one report analyzing the findings of 21 studies that followed 350,000 people for up to 23 years. (1)

(1) *Siri-Tarino, P.W., et al., Meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies evaluating the association of saturated fat with cardiovascular disease. Am J Clin Nutr, 2010, 91(3): p. 535-46.*

Investigators looked at the relationship between saturated fat intake and coronary heart disease (CHD), stroke, and cardiovascular disease (CVD). Their controversial conclusion: “There is insufficient evidence from prospective epidemiologic studies to conclude that dietary saturated fat is associated with an increased risk of CHD, stroke, or CVD.”

With studies questioning the link between saturated fat and heart disease, in order to set the record straight, Harvard School of Public Health convened a panel of nutrition experts and held a teach-in, “[Saturated or not: Does type of fat matter?](#)“

The overarching message is that cutting back on saturated fat can be good for health *if people replace saturated fat with good fats*, especially, polyunsaturated fats. Eating good fats in place of saturated fat lowers the “bad” LDL cholesterol, and it improves the ratio of total cholesterol to “good” HDL cholesterol, lowering the risk of heart disease.

Eating good fats in place of saturated fat can also help prevent insulin resistance, a precursor to diabetes. (2) So while saturated fat may not be as harmful as once thought, evidence clearly shows that unsaturated fat remains the healthiest type of fat.

(2) *Riserus, U., W.C. Willett, and F.B. Hu, Dietary fats and prevention of type 2 diabetes. Prog Lipid Res, 2009, 48(1): p. 44-51.*