



Newsletter

All the latest on fat related issues.



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Welcome.

Welcome to the first issue of Fat Matters, the e-bulletin from The Fat Panel. With 'fat' stories seemingly hitting the headlines all the time now, our aim is to separate the fact from the fiction to help you present informative, educational and accurate stories. Our members are always happy to comment on stories and you can contact us either by email on info@TheFatPanel.org.uk or telephone on 020 7808 9818.

People are confused about dietary fats and are asking for clear, easy to understand information to make healthy, informed dietary choices. The Fat Panel is a new, independent, panel which can answer all your questions about dietary fats. The Panel provides independent and objective information about the important role and benefits of oils and fats and how we can all get it right. The Fat Panel brings together experts in the areas of lipid metabolism, public health, general practice, nutrition and pharmacy.

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Fat News

High fat is nice for mice

A recently published animal study has shown that cutting down on fat in the diet of mice after they had been used to a high-fat diet made them feel stressed and unrewarded once they had to start eating their house chow instead. When the mice had access to the high-fat diet again that appeared to make them feel rewarded and less sensitive to stress; they were even prepared to put up with an adverse environment just so they could return to eating the high fat diet.

Sian Porter of The Fat Panel says "There is a huge danger in extrapolating data from single studies, particularly animal ones despite what the popular press would have us believe, but they do give an interesting pointers for further research in humans. Dietary fats contribute to the palatability of foods and the sensory action of fat in the mouth helps high-fat foods to taste good and so we feel rewarded – just like the mice! Research has shown that this, combined with fat being less satisfying than other nutrients, can lead to increased consumption of fat and, therefore, also calories. The good news is that you can adapt to lower fat foods over time, the bad news is be aware that there will always be the temptation of high-fat foods so be realistic. Don't cut out fat completely, make sure you choose the right fat and have an occasional treat - we're only human! "

Clinical hope in vitamin treatment for TB

There are two main sources of vitamin D – direct from sunlight through the skin or through diet. Vitamin D is found in few foods, but oily fish, spreads and eggs are good sources. In addition to this new link to battling TB, Vitamin D also helps to maintain strong bones and aids the absorption of calcium into the body. A 40-year review of research also found that a daily dose of vitamin D could cut the risk of cancers of the breast, colon and ovary by up to half. Studies have also suggested that the sunshine vitamin may also play a vital role in heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and schizophrenia.

Research published this week suggests that vitamin D can help keep tuberculosis (TB) at bay. It is thought that vitamin D can help boost the immune system to fight off this potentially deadly condition. Nearly nine million people around the world are newly diagnosed with TB each year and it is estimated that nearly two million people around die each year. Incidence in the UK is on the increase and about 8,000 new cases are expected to be reported here this year.

In the study, which took place at Queen Mary's School of Medicine and Imperial College, 131 people had blood samples taken, which were then infected with the bacterium that causes TB. The group was then split in two and half were given a 2.5mg of vitamin D whilst the other half were given a dummy pill. After six weeks, blood was taken again and infected with the TB bug. When analysed a day later, the growth of bacteria in the blood from the people who were given the vitamin D was 20% less than the other group, suggesting that the vitamin D had helped to keep the disease at bay. Many years ago, vitamin D was used to treat TB in sanatoriums before antibiotics came into use. Now, this new study provides new evidence of the vitamin's preventative benefits.

One in seven adults has been reported to be deficient in vitamin D. People with dark skin, vegans and those who get little exposure to sunlight are most at risk of vitamin D deficiency. Even those who do receive enough vitamin D, either through their diet or the sunlight, may still be deficient if they do not eat enough dietary fat. Vitamins A, D, E and K all need dietary fat in order to be properly absorbed into and used by the body.

Doctors hear how switching fats can boost health

One of the key messages that The Fat Panel is trying to help people take on board is that they need to watch the TYPE of fat they eat. This idea was supported recently during a conference at the Royal Society of Medicine (RSM). The RSM is an independent organisation, which provides training for doctors and other healthcare professionals. At the recent meeting, they discussed the link between dietary fat intake and health.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) currently accounts for nearly one third of all deaths worldwide (30%) and is expected to increase alarmingly. It is well accepted that smoking, high blood pressure, excessive levels of 'bad' cholesterol, obesity, physical inactivity and having type 2 diabetes are the main risk factors for CVD. Diet and lifestyle can have a big effect in reducing some of these risk factors.

During the conference, one of the key points highlighted was the importance of the type of fat in our diet, rather than the total amount of fat, determining the risk of CVD. Dr Zampelas from the Harakopio University in Greece talked about how the Mediterranean diet is associated with a reduced risk of high blood pressure and CVD. He pointed out that the Mediterranean diet contains a similar total fat content to the UK diet, but they have a lower risk of high blood pressure and CVD. It is the type of fat that is different; most of the fats in the Mediterranean diet are unsaturated, whereas we eat much more saturated fat in the UK. By switching the saturated fat in our diet to unsaturated, we could all reduce our risks of high blood pressure and CVD.

Looking at diabetes, another presentation heard from Professor Vessby from the Uppsala University in Sweden, who spoke about how changing the quality, not the quantity, of fat in our diets can have an impact on insulin resistance, so reducing the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. Switching from a diet which is high in saturated fats to one which is rich in unsaturated fats can have a big positive impact.

The Fat Panel agrees with all the outcomes from the RSM conference. The advice that we would give is that most of us do not need to worry too much about how much fat we eat as the average amount we are eating is within acceptable guidelines. We do need to think about what types of fat we are eating, however, and consider switching 'bad' fats to 'good'. As a basic guide, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are the healthier fats that we need to switch to where we can.



Monounsaturated

Common sources include olive and rapeseed oils, spreads, nuts and seeds, cereals, potato snacks

Polyunsaturated

Common sources are vegetable oils such as sunflower, safflower, corn and soya oils, fat spreads made from these, meats, fish, nuts and seeds



Saturated

Common sources are full-fat dairy food, butter, meat and meat products (pastries), biscuits, cakes.

Trans-fatty acids

Sources include butter and dairy products, some meats, biscuits, cakes, cheese, meat pies & pastries

The Fat Panel hit the airwaves

Sian Porter of The Fat Panel was featured on LBC Radio recently in a discussion on fats. Click [here](#) to hear the tips Sian gives on how to include monounsaturated and polyunsaturated good fats in your diet and cut down on the bad fats. Or you can click [here](#) to visit the LBC web site.

Featured Profile



Dr Sarah Berry BSc MSc PhD RNutr

Dr Berry is a registered Nutritionist and a member of the Diet and Cardiovascular Nutritional Sciences Research Group, holding a Ph.D. in Nutrition in the area of cardiovascular health and a MSc. in Nutrition. Her specialist area of knowledge and research is lipid metabolism and coronary heart disease risk. She is well regarded in her field and is a true expert on dietary fats.

Sarah is a lecturer in the department of Nutrition & Dietetics at King's College, London, leading research and teaching in the area of lipids, cardiovascular health and nutrition. She has recently completed the European Nutrition Leadership Programme, for which the top 30 nutritionists in Europe are annually selected to attend as the future leaders in nutrition. She is a member of the British Nutrition Society and the International Society for the Study of Fatty Acids and Lipids.

She has published papers (reviews and original research) in a number of leading international nutrition journals and has also written for more consumer-based publications such as 'Nutrition Bulletin'.

Fat Feature

It seems we've become a nation obsessed by fat. It dominates the headlines from the junk food served in schools to the growing problem of obesity to trans-fatty acids (TFAs) taking over the world – or so it seems! Fat is an issue that arises every day of our lives - counting calories has been replaced by counting fat content. But with so many types of fat, how do people know whether they are counting the right fat? How can they distinguish the bad fat from the good fat?

What is dietary fat?

There are several nutrient groups - carbohydrates, protein, vitamins and minerals, fibre and fat. Each is

vital, in appropriate quantities, to a healthy, balanced diet.

Dietary fats are otherwise known as fatty acids or lipids. There are two main types of dietary fats - unsaturated and saturated. This refers to how they are chemically structured.

Why do we need fat in our lives?

Fat is an essential part of a healthy, well balanced diet. It provides essential fatty acids, provides and allows the body to absorb Vitamins A, D, E and K, improves the taste and texture of food and is an important source of food energy. Dietary fat is also needed by the body to maintain healthy skin, immune function and development of the brain and visual system. It is important that you choose the right fat to eat, however.

Recommended fat intakes are based on energy needs and physical activity levels. Present guidelines suggest that less than 35% of daily energy intake (EI) should come from fat and less than 11% from saturated fat. The energy requirements for an average woman and man are 2,000 and 2,500 kcals per day respectively.

Broadly speaking, there are unsaturated and saturated fats and, as a general rule, unsaturated fats are the good ones (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated) and saturated fats the baddies. The one exception to this rule is trans-fatty acids, which are unsaturated fats but they act on the body in a similar way to saturated fats and too much in the diet is linked to cardiovascular disease. [For more information, please click here.](#)

On average, most of us in the UK are currently eating well within the experts' recommended limits on TFAs, so there is no major dietary concern here. Instead, people should be more wary about the amounts of saturated fat in their diets. Our concern is that saturated fat intake is being overlooked as a health issue, yet it too is responsible for raising the levels of 'bad' cholesterol, which can lead to coronary heart disease. There have even been clinical studies suggesting links to diabetes. People are eating too much saturated fat. The Committee on Medical Aspects of Food and Nutrition Policy (COMA) set a daily recommended value (DRV) of <11% of daily energy intake for saturated fat, but current consumption is at 13% - that's 17% more than we should be eating!

Responses

Q: What's the difference between omega-3, polyunsaturated fats and essential fatty acids?

A: Essential fatty acids play an important role in the maintenance of healthy skin, reproduction, immune function and development of the brain and visual system and cannot be made by the body so need to be consumed. These essential fatty acids are otherwise known as omega-3 and omega-6. Polyunsaturated fats are the dietary source for these vital fatty acids.

Omega-3 is found in vegetable oils, spreads and oily fish, such as sardines, mackerel and salmon). Most of us are eating enough omega-3, but some of the health benefits only come from a specific type of omega-3 called 'very long-chain' and many of us are not getting enough of this. It is found in fish and some fortified products and about 10% of normal long-chain omega-3, found in vegetable oils and spreads, can be converted to very long chain by the body.

In order for the omega-3 we eat to have the best effect on the body we also need omega-6. Rich sources include vegetable oils, such as sunflower, safflower, corn and soya oils, spreads, some meats, nuts and seeds. Omega-6 aids growth, reproduction, haemostatis (the body's way of stopping bleeding) and helps boost the immune system and healthy skin.

Posted by: Dr. Paul

Date: 12/03/2007 - 15:22

Your Feedback



We value your feedback. Let us know what you think!

[Click here to post feedback on this topic](#)

Fat Vote

How much fat do you think we should be eating on average per day?

- [- 25% of daily calories](#)
- [- 35% of calories](#)
- [- 45% of calories](#)

Top Tips

Omega-3 and omega-6 are polyunsaturated fats, which are also known as essential fatty acids, because they cannot be made in the body but are essential for normal physiological functioning. Essential fatty acids play an important role in the maintenance of healthy skin, reproduction, immune function and development of the brain and visual system.

Good sources of omega-3 are oil-rich fish (sardines, mackerel, salmon), leafy green vegetables, walnuts and some vegetable oil spreads whereas omega-6 is found in some meats, nuts, seeds and vegetable oils such as sunflower, safflower, corn and soya oils and fat spreads made from these. Both these essential fatty acids are vital for optimum health.

Getting the balance of omega-6 and omega-3 right in our diets is very important if we are to maximise health benefits. On average, most of us need to be eating more omega-3 in order to reap benefit.