

Article - 16 May 2007

## 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 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 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.



### The Fat Panel

1st Floor  
1 Chelsea Manor Gardens  
London SW3 5PN  
T: 0207 808 9818  
E: [info@thefatpanel.org.uk](mailto:info@thefatpanel.org.uk)

	
<p><b>Monounsaturated</b> Common sources include olive and rapeseed oils, spreads, nuts and seeds, meat and meat products, cereals, potato snacks</p>	<p><b>Saturated</b> Common sources are full-fat dairy food, butter, meat and meat products (pastries), biscuits, cakes.</p>
<p><b>Polyunsaturated</b> Common sources are vegetable oils such as sunflower, safflower, corn and soya oils, fat spreads made from these, meats, fish, nuts and seeds</p>	<p><b>Trans-fatty acids</b> Common sources are some biscuits, cakes, cheese, meat pies &amp; pastries</p>