

Diet Heart Myths (a handout for every confused client or know-it-all MD)

by [Mike Demeter](#) on Thursday, January 19, 2012 at 8:37pm

Q: Do we have more heart disease today because we're living longer?

A: No. **Adult life expectancy** in 1910 was the same as today. Average life expectancy in 1910 was just 45 years, but when you factor out infant mortality and young women who died giving birth, you were just as likely to reach age 75 as you are today.

Q: Are diabetes, obesity and heart disease mostly hereditary?

A: Diabetes, obesity and coronary heart disease were far less common in 1910 (per capita), and our genes don't change in 100 years. As an example, the lifetime risk of diabetes in 1910 was 1 in 30; today it is 1 in 3. What has changed in the U.S. is the quality of our food, especially the type of fat and the type of carbohydrate we are eating.

Q: Were "Cave man" and traditional diets low in fat?

A: No. Throughout the world, primitive peoples sought out and consumed fat from fish and shellfish, water fowl, sea mammals, land birds, insects, reptiles, rodents, bears, dogs, pigs, cattle, sheep, goats, game, eggs, nuts and milk products. (westonaprice.org/ Abrams, Food & Evolution 1987)

Q: Do vegetarians live longer?

A: No. The all-cause annual death rate of vegetarian men is slightly more than that of non-vegetarian men (.93% vs .89%); the annual death rate of vegetarian women is significantly more than that of non-vegetarian women (.86% vs .54%) (Am J Clin Nutr 1982 36:873)

Q: Will a vegetarian diet protect you against atherosclerosis?

A: No. The International Atherosclerosis Project found that vegetarians had just as much atherosclerosis as meat eaters. (Lab Invest 1968 18:498)

Q: Does the European country with the highest average cholesterol have the lowest life expectancy?

A: No – just the opposite! Switzerland has the highest average cholesterol levels (264 mg/dl) and the highest life expectancy. The Russians have the lowest cholesterol levels and the lowest life expectancy. (Dr. Malcolm Kendrick, MONICA study).

Q: Is heart disease is caused by cholesterol and saturated fat from animal products?

A: No, heart disease has multiple, inter-related causes. During the steady increase in reported coronary heart disease (1920–1967), consumption of animal fats declined but consumption of hydrogenated and industrially processed vegetable fats increased dramatically. (USDA statistics)

Q: Does saturated fat clog arteries?

A: No. So-called blockage is a complex "patch," including – dominantly – fibrous tissue. The fatty acid component found in artery "blockage" is mostly unsaturated (74%) of which 41% is polyunsaturated. (Lancet 1994 344:1195)

Q: Is it true that Vitamin B12 can be obtained from certain plant sources such as blue-green algae and soy products?

A: Vitamin B12 is not absorbed from plant sources. Modern soy products increase the body's requirement for B12. Liver (organ meat) is our best source of all B-complex vitamins. (westonaprice.org).

Q: Is it true that for good health and long life, serum cholesterol should be less than 180 mg/dl?

A: Not according to the American Heart Association journal Circulation! The all-cause death rate is higher in individuals with cholesterol levels lower than 180 mg/dl. (Circulation, 1992 86:3:1026–1029).

Q: Do children benefit from a low-fat diet?

A: No, children need a high fat, high cholesterol diet! Mother's milk is the highest cholesterol food on earth. Children on low-fat diets suffer from growth problems, failure to thrive & learning disabilities. (Food Chem News 10/3/94).

Q: Will a low-fat diet help you "feel better and increase your joy of living?"

A: No, as with growing children, low-fat diets are associated with increased rates of depression, psychological problems, fatigue, violence and suicide. (Lancet 3/21/92 v339).

Q: Is cholesterol made in the liver?

A: Yes – but every cell in the body can make cholesterol (except nerve tissue). Because dietary cholesterol is poorly absorbed – 50 percent at best – the body relies on endogenous production for its cholesterol needs, 1200 to 1800 milligrams per day. (Dr. Mary Enig, PhD, lipid biochemist).

Q: Are lard (the rendered fat from a pig) and chicken skin saturated fats?

A: Actually, lard and chicken fat are 60 and 70 percent unsaturated, respectively. Like all food fats, lard and chicken fat are a combination of different fatty acids – saturated and unsaturated. Lard and chicken fat are dominantly monounsaturated oleic acid, the dominant fat in olive oil. The experts who warn us about fat have yet to take their first course in lipid biochemistry.

Q: Are saturated fats animal fats?

A: No, saturated fats are found abundantly in tropical oils (coconut and palm) and are also present in varying amounts in most plants. Olive oil, for example, is 15–16 percent saturated fat. Even flaxseeds contain saturated fat. Fats are universal; saturated stearic acid in butter is the same molecule as stearic acid in chocolate. (Dr. Mary Enig, PhD, lipid biochemist).

Q: Are polyunsaturated fats “plant fats”?

A: Polyunsaturated fats are also found in marine life, fish and animals. Excess highly processed polyunsaturated fats – incorporated into are tissues – can promote injury and inflammation. Inflammation in the artery walls leads to plaque build up and blood clots.

Q: Is vegetable shortening such as Crisco better than lard for a hearty health?

A: Crisco shortening – hydrogenated vegetable fat made by Proctor & Gamble since 1912 – is harmful. For decades, Crisco has been a significant source of trans fatty acids in the American diet. Trans fats are not safe at any level. Lard from properly raised pigs is trans-free and is a great source of natural vitamin D.

Q: Is Butter is more fattening than olive oil?

A: No! Butter contains 15–17 percent short and medium chain fats that go right to the liver; not into our general circulation. Also, butter is 20 percent water. Olive oil is 100% fat and contains only long chain fats that circulate after digestion. Olive oil is potentially more “fattening” although fats do not make us fat unless they are part of a high carbohydrate diet.

Q: Does butter contain a lot of cholesterol?

A: No – cholesterol is found in food in tiny milligram (mg) amounts. A pound of butter contains 985 mg of cholesterol – less than 1 gram. A tablespoon of butter contains only 30 milligrams of cholesterol – and only 1/2 is absorbed. You would have to eat two pounds of butter daily in order to turn off the body's own cholesterol synthesis.

Q: Does high cholesterol foods raise blood cholesterol?

A: Another myth! There's no evidence that cholesterol in food raises cholesterol in blood – other than the positive result of promoting higher levels of beneficial HDL cholesterol. Towards the end of his life, Ancel Keys, the University of Minnesota professor who was first to blame cholesterol and fat on heart disease, said, "Cholesterol in food has no influence on cholesterol in blood and we've known that all along."

Q: Does excess animal protein causes calcium to leach from the bones?

A: No – the poorly conducted studies that make this false claim used dry protein powder – not fresh meat. Our bodies are made of protein and fat. We need optimum amounts of fresh protein and fat in order to rebuild and maintain our bodies.

Q: Are excess dietary carbohydrates stored as carbohydrate?

A: No, excess carbohydrates are turned into fat and stored as fat, especially in the abdomen, butt and thighs. Eat a lot of bread, cereal, pasta, juices and soft drinks and your body will turn it into fat. (Dr. Robert C. Atkins)

Q: Is calcium is the most important mineral for the heart?

A: No – and in excess – calcium becomes a bully – replacing magnesium in soft tissue throughout the body. "Hardening of the arteries" or calcification = too much calcium and not enough magnesium. It is unsafe to supplement with calcium unless you are taking equal amounts or more magnesium.

Q: Are running and aerobic exercise good for the heart?

A: Running and extreme exercise can be deadly! The number one cause of death among marathon runners is coronary heart disease. Runners tend to have enlarged hearts. Extreme exercise stresses the body and causes magnesium deficiencies. (Dr. William Campbell Douglas, MD)

Q: Is health-food-store Canola oil a "good fat."

A: Canola (Canadian Oil) is made from genetically altered rapeseed. It is highly processed – subject to high temperature, high pressure. Canola contains small amounts of trans fat even though the label may say "trans fat free." Canola in baked goods can promote mold growth that you cannot see.

Q: Do cholesterol-lowering drugs reduce the incidence of heart failure?

A: Just the opposite. Since approved in record-time in 1987, statin drugs are associated with a doubling of the incidence of heart failure.

Q: Is heart-healthy L-Carnitine a reason to eat your veggies?

A: No. Fruits, vegetables and grains are poor sources of Carnitine. Red meat is best, especially mutton, lamb and beef. The same is true for the important mineral zinc. Zinc is poorly absorbed from plants and easily absorbed from red meat. (Robert Crayhon)

Q: To avoid heart disease, should we use margarine instead of butter?

A: No, never eat margarine despite what manufacturers claim. Margarine eaters have twice the rate of heart disease as butter eaters. (Nutrition Week 3/22/91 21:12)

Q: Does highly saturated coconut oil causes heart disease?

A: No. Populations that consume coconut oil have low rates of heart disease. Coconut oil may also be one of the most useful oils to prevent heart disease because of its antiviral

and antimicrobial characteristics. (JAMA 1967 202:1119–1123; Am J Clin Nutr 1981 34:1552)

Q: Is it true that in 1977, a vegetarian researched and wrote the first U.S. Dietary Guidelines?

A: Yes, a true statement! Mr. Nick Mottern, a vegetarian and former labor reporter for a Providence, RI newspaper, was hired by Senator George McGovern's committee staff to write our first ever low fat Dietary Guidelines. (Gary Taubes, Good Calories, Bad Calories)

Q: Heart-Healthy L-Carnitine is a reason to eat your veggies.

A. Fruits, vegetables and grains are poor sources of Carnitine. Red meat is best, especially mutton, lamb, beef, pork, and chicken (in that order). Carnitine delivers fuel to the heart and muscles. Carnitine = increased cardiac energy. The heart wants fuel – not fiber. Carnitine is the delivery truck and a solid nutritional reason to eat good quality red meat every day.

Source: <http://www.dietheartpublishing.com/faq> – an excellent book for every Health and Fitness Professional's Library !