

The Weston A. Price Foundation

Know Your Fats Introduction

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Confused About Fats?

The following nutrient-rich traditional fats have nourished healthy population groups for thousands of years:

For Cooking

- Butter
- Tallow and suet from beef and lamb
- Lard from pigs
- Chicken, goose and duck fat
- Coconut, palm and palm kernel oils

For Salads

- Extra virgin olive oil (also OK for cooking)
- Expeller-expressed sesame and peanut oils
- Expeller-expressed flax oil (in small amounts)

For Fat-Soluble Vitamins

- Fish liver oils such as cod liver oil (preferable to fish oils, which do not provide fat-soluble vitamins, can cause an overdose of unsaturated fatty acids and usually come from farmed fish.)

The following newfangled fats can cause cancer, heart disease, immune system dysfunction, sterility, learning disabilities, growth problems and osteoporosis:

- All hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils
- Industrially processed liquid oils such as soy, corn, safflower, cottonseed and canola
- Fats and oils (especially vegetable oils) heated to very high temperatures in processing and frying.

The Many Roles of Saturated Fat

Saturated fats, such as butter, meat fats, coconut oil and palm oil, tend to be solid at room temperature. According to conventional nutritional dogma, these traditional fats are to blame for most of our modern diseases—heart disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, malfunction of cell membranes and even nervous disorders like multiple sclerosis. However, many scientific studies indicate that it is processed liquid vegetable oil—which is laden with free radicals formed during processing—and artificially hardened vegetable oil—called trans fat—that are the culprits in these modern conditions, not natural saturated fats.

Humans need saturated fats because we are warm blooded. Our bodies do not function at room temperature, but at a tropical temperature. Saturated fats provide the appropriate stiffness and structure to our cell membranes and tissues. When we consume a lot of liquid unsaturated oils, our cell membranes do not have structural integrity to function properly, they become too “floppy,” and when we consume a lot of trans fat, which is not as soft as saturated fats at body temperature, our cell membranes become too “stiff.”

Contrary to the accepted view, which is not scientifically based, saturated fats do not clog arteries or cause heart disease. In fact, the preferred food for the heart is saturated fat; and saturated fats lower a substance called Lp(a), which is a very accurate marker for proneness to heart disease.

Saturated fats play many important roles in the body chemistry. They strengthen the immune system and are involved in inter-cellular communication, which means they protect us against cancer. They help the receptors on our cell membranes work properly, including receptors for insulin, thereby protecting us against diabetes. The lungs cannot function without saturated fats,

which is why children given butter and full-fat milk have much less asthma than children given reduced-fat milk and margarine. Saturated fats are also involved in kidney function and hormone production.

Saturated fats are required for the nervous system to function properly, and over half the fat in the brain is saturated. Saturated fats also help suppress inflammation. Finally, saturated animal fats carry the vital fat-soluble vitamins A, D and K₂, which we we need in large amounts to be healthy.

Human beings have been consuming saturated fats from animals products, milk products and the tropical oils for thousands of years; it is the advent of modern processed vegetable oil that is associated with the epidemic of modern degenerative disease, not the consumption of saturated fats.

The Fat-Soluble Activators

The crux of Dr. Price's research has to do with what he called the "fat-soluble activators," vitamins found in the fats and organ meats of grass-fed animals and in certain seafoods, such as fish eggs, shellfish, oily fish and fish liver oil. The three fat-soluble activators are vitamin A, vitamin D and a nutrient he referred to as Activator X, now considered to be vitamin K₂, the animal form of vitamin K. In traditional diets, levels of these key nutrients were about ten times higher than levels in diets based on the foods of modern commerce, containing sugar, white flour and vegetable oil. Dr. Price referred to these vitamins as activators because they serve as the catalysts for mineral absorption. Without them, minerals cannot be used by the body, no matter how plentiful they may be in the diet.

Modern research completely validates the findings of Dr. Price. We now know that vitamin A is vital for mineral and protein metabolism, the prevention of birth defects, the optimum development of infants and children, protection against infection, the production of stress and sex hormones, thyroid function, and healthy eyes, skin and bones. Vitamin A is depleted by

stress, infection, fever, heavy exercise, exposure to pesticides and industrial chemicals, and excess protein consumption (hence our warnings against the consumption of excess protein in the form of lean meat, lowfat milk and protein powders.)

Modern research has also revealed the many roles played by vitamin D, which is needed for mineral metabolism, healthy bones and nervous system, muscle tone, reproductive health, insulin production, protection against depression, and protection against chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease.

Vitamin K plays an important role in growth and facial development, normal reproduction, development of healthy bones and teeth, protection against calcification and inflammation of the arteries, myelin synthesis and learning capacity.

Modern health literature is rife with misinformation about the fat-soluble vitamins. Many health writers claim that humans can obtain adequate vitamin A from plant foods. But the carotenes in plant foods are not true vitamin A. Instead, they serve as precursors that are converted into vitamin A in the small intestine. Human beings are not good converters of vitamin A, especially as infants or when they suffer from diabetes, thyroid problems or intestinal disorders. Thus, for optimal health, humans require animal foods containing liberal amounts of vitamin A. Similarly, many claim that adequate vitamin D can be obtained from a short daily exposure to sunlight. But the body only makes vitamin D when the sun is directly overhead, that is, in the summer months, during midday. For most of the year (and even in the summer for those who do not make a practice of sunbathing), humans must obtain vitamin D from foods. As for vitamin K, most health books mention only its role in blood clotting, without recognizing the many other vital roles played by this nutrient.

Vitamins A, D and K work synergistically. Vitamins A and D tell cells to make certain proteins; after the cellular enzymes make these proteins, they are activated by vitamin K. This synergy explains reports of toxicity from taking vitamins A, D or K in isolation. All three of these nutrients must come together in the diet or the body will develop deficiencies in the missing activators.

The vital roles of these fat-soluble vitamins and the high levels found in the diets of healthy traditional peoples confirm the importance of pasture-feeding livestock. If domestic animals are not consuming green grass, vitamins A and K will be largely missing from their fat, organ meats, butterfat and egg yolks; if the animals are not raised in the sunlight, vitamin D will be largely missing from these foods.

Because it is so difficult to obtain adequate fat-soluble activators in the modern diet, Dr. Price

recommended cod liver oil to provide vitamins A and D, along with a source of vitamin K, such as butter from grass-fed animals or what he called high-vitamin butter oil, made by low-temperature centrifuging of butter from cows eating rapidly growing grass. Consumed in liberal amounts during pregnancy, lactation and the period of growth, these nutrients ensure the optimal physical and mental development of children; consumed by adults, these nutrients protect against acute and chronic disease.

It is important to choose cod liver oil with care as many brands contain very little vitamin D, with potential toxicity of vitamin A. For recommended brands see [Cod Liver Oil Basics & Recommendations \(index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=238:cod-liver-oil-basics-and-recommendations&catid=37:cod-liver-oil&Itemid=128\)](https://www.westonaprice.org/health-topics/know-your-fats/know-your-fats-introduction/#gsc.tab=0).

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