

LOW FAT DIETS MAKE YOU FAT

Intro

The notion of a low fat diet that has been the forefront of our guidelines over the past 20 years has ultimately led to a grand rise in the development of obesity and type 2 diabetes. Surely you may think low fat diets must help you lose weight, but what is the truth behind low fat food. Are you afraid of consuming fats in the form of nuts and seeds etc for fear that they will increase your waistline? Lets have a look at the current consensus and then make a further decision.

As a personal trainer I am often challenged by new clients when I suggest to them that their current diet is lacking in healthy fats and that their bodies require a certain amount to firstly function but also to benefit greatly. It is certainly not their fault, since the 1980's we have been told by government, the media and other influential sources to steer clear of high fat foods and that a diet low in fat, rich in carbohydrates and moderate in protein would be sufficient to sustain a healthy body.

Main Article

Walk around any supermarket and you will be faced with 1000's of options to fill your trolley for the weeks shopping. I imagine that a lot of you are looking to put food in your fridge and cupboards that will keep your family healthy but what is it that you look for. Ok, I understand that reading food labels is not practical when you may have many mouths to feed and numerous other tasks to do that day so how do you approach it. I presume that looking for healthy food consists of buying the labels that state "LOW FAT" as you have been told for so long that this approach is what works. Numerous health problems have resulted from this approach so you need to understand what will truly make your family healthy.

In western society we have seen that although the percentage of our diet that results from fat has decreased over the past 20 years, the prevalence of obesity has risen dramatically. A study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition and a further study in the American journal of Medicine looking over all the available data concluded "Diets high in fat do not appear to be the primary cause of the high prevalence of excess body fat in our society." This obviously leads us to suggest that there must be a different cause.

Where the problem may lie in fact is the intake of too many wrong sources of carbohydrates. Now I am not here to totally outlaw all carbohydrates, they are very important for providing energy and our diets should contain a sufficient proportion of them but they must be the correct type. You may have heard of

diets such as Atkins, who promotes really low to zero intake of carbohydrates but this is not the healthy balance we are looking for.

When you consume lots of refined carbohydrates such as white bread, white pasta, white potatoes, sugary snacks etc these quickly enter your blood stream. This is known as the glycemic load and is where the glycemic index (GI) results from. If there is too much sugar for your body to use in energy production you will leave the excess floating around in your blood which can convert to fat and cholesterol and ultimately stores inside your body. When choosing carbohydrates if you stick to carbohydrates that have a low glycemic index (Low GI) such as sweet potatoes, most fruit and vegetables, oatmeal and wholemeal and your portion control is fine you will be ok.

So what are healthy fats and how can they help you and your family?

The fats that we need are known as essential fatty acids and are used for many processes in the body every single day. There are two types you must have in your diet omega 3 and omega 6. You can achieve optimum levels of both of these by consuming foods such as fish, olive oil, nuts and seeds.

The human body uses fatty acids to perform very functions. These include;

Brain Function – learning, mood and memory.

Heart – most of our hearts energy results from burning fat

Lungs – helps keep them from collapsing.

Digestive system – helps slow down the rate at which food is digested for better nutrient absorption

Organs – help protect your internal organs

Immune system – they help reduce inflammation which keeps you healthy and functioning.

FATS AND DISEASE

Further to daily functions, omega 3 intake has been shown have a dramatic impact on a number of diseases.

The incidence of Cardiovascular disease (CVD) has been shown be reduced with a diet rich in omega 3 due to its ability to reduce triglycerides, reduce arrhythmia's, reduce growth rate of atherosclerotic plaque and slightly lowering blood pressure.

Omega 3 has also been shown to be beneficial in the treatment and prevention of liver cancer, the reduction in symptoms of depression and the reduced likelihood of developing dementia.

Now with all of the benefits listed above, you are also probably wondering the same as me, why is low fat still being promoted? Try implementing some of the following tips into your next weekly shop and you could be on your way to providing a healthy diet for both you and your family.

5 Tips for a healthy lifestyle

- 1) Dress to impress – choose a salad dressing that is made from a base of either olive oil or flaxseed oil.
- 2) Go nuts – purchase a no added salt mixed nut selection to sample to see which types you prefer then keep a selection handy for a quick snack.
- 3) Don't buy Low Fat snacks – they usually contain high sugar as a substitute, instead opt for a piece of fruit
- 4) Buy fish – replacing red meat with fish will satisfy your omega 3 intake
- 5) Steer clear of refined carbohydrates.