

## Open Your Eyes to Saturated Fat

Most of us love ghee. But we have a problem. We're told that ghee isn't healthful. We're told that ghee causes heart disease. And more importantly, we're told that ghee makes us fat!

The primary reason behind such recommendations is that ghee is rich in saturated fat and saturated fat is supposedly harmful. This is also the reason behind recommendations against the consumption of coconut products, red meat and cheeses.

### **But what if saturated fat isn't harmful but, in fact, healthful?**

Shocking, I know. But consider the following.

- Saturated fat is found abundantly in real foods like dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese, cream, butter, ghee), coconuts, macadamia nuts and meat.
- Our ancestors who exhibited excellent health thrived on dairy, meat and coconuts.
- Our very own vegetarian south Indian ancestors consumed copious amounts of whole milk and ghee and lived long healthy lives, even though their activity levels weren't abnormally high and healthcare was non-existent.

### **Putting these in perspective,**

- Saturated fats are found pretty much only in real foods.
- Humans who lived before industrialization lived super healthy lives eating naturally occurring saturated fats.
- Our great grand parents who chowed down saturated fat in pretty much every single meal lived longer and healthier than anyone in this generation.
- In the last 100 years, the consumption of saturated fat reduced drastically and the consumption of vegetable oils increased by 400% but the incidence of heart diseases has only increased multifold.

Unless I'm completely out of my mind, it seems pretty obvious that people who ate real food that is rich in saturated fat lived healthy lives and people who adopted mainstream health recommendations and substituted carbohydrates and/or vegetable oils for saturated fats are living disease ridden sad lives plagued with diabetes, obesity, arthritis, celiac and hypertension!

Let's take a couple of minutes and clear this up, shall we?

### **Firstly, here some things about saturated fats that you need to know.**

- 50% of all our cell membranes are made up of saturated fat.
- The fat around the heart muscle is highly saturated and is the preferred source of fuel for

the heart.

- Even adipose tissue, the fat you “put on” which is stored by your body for future use, is saturated.
- When you go on a diet, your body feeds on stored fat which is saturated. So whether you eat saturated fat or a high carb low calorie diet, your body is being fed saturated fat.
- Human breast milk contains high levels of saturated fat.

Clearly, saturated fat isn't something foreign to the body. The body is very familiar with it and hence extremely efficient in using it. That said, let's move on to benefits of saturated fat consumption.

### **There are benefits?**

Yes, there are benefits and yes, there are peer reviewed scientific publications to back all this up.

- Consumption of saturated fat improves immunity and hence aids in prevention of infectious diseases.
- Saturated animal fats (dairy, red meat, organ meats etc.) come with an abundance of fat-soluble vitamins.
- Saturated fat consumption reduces risk of stroke, helps improve liver health by protecting it from alcohol and other toxins, helps with asthma prevention and improves bone health by facilitating effective calcium absorption.
- Consumption of lauric acid (a saturated fatty acid) results in a more favorable LDL/HDL ratio.
- Saturated fat consumption is associated with prevention and lessening progression of coronary heart disease.

### **So what now?**

Start adding ladles of ghee and coconut to your food? Nope. The point is to understand that ghee, coconut, grass fed red meat and organic natural cheeses are extremely healthful options and *need* to be included in a diet that is wholesome, filled with real foods and devoid of junk food, empty calories and gut irritants.

*Note:* This article was originally published in The Hindu MetroPlus