

# Your Best "Fats" for Life

By Isabelle Vettese

With soaring obesity and cardiovascular fatality rates in North America, the crusade against fats has gone mad! Are we what we eat? The relationship between poor food choices, fatty foods and health is undisputable: what we put in our body is the catalyst for our ailments and chronic pains.

So is saturated fat all that bad for you? Well, the liver uses it to manufacture cholesterol, and only an excessive consumption could significantly raise the level of blood cholesterol, especially LDL, leading to heart and artery problems. On the other hand, trans-fats are a big no-no! They are always harmful and largely contribute to the risk of cardiovascular diseases, arthritis and cancer.

Considered "good fat", essential fatty acids (EFAs) are in essence all beneficial, provided they have not been degenerated by heat or oxidized. Monounsaturated oleic acid (omega 9) appears to moderately reduce blood levels of LDL without affecting HDL; however, it is suggested its intake should still be moderate.

What about omegas 3 & 6? Omega-3s are the single most important essential nutrients as every living cell needs them to remain functional and to produce new ones. Since they cannot be manufactured by the body, they must be supplied through diet. Their lack of consumption can become a grave concern and is associated to over 50 illnesses and conditions. An excessive consumption of omega-6 contributes to the development of a range of human cancers, to oxidative damage and cell proliferation.

So, exactly what fats should you consume to guarantee yourself great health? Omega-3s stimulate anti-inflammatory pathways in the body while an omega-6 orientated diet stimulates pro-inflammatory channels. Omega-3s can do your heart a lot of good by lowering the triglycerides level, the bad cholesterol LDL, the incidence of arrhythmia, atherosclerosis and thrombosis. Not all omega-3s are equal. Studies indicate that, indeed, metabolic differences exist between ALA (Alpha-Linolenic acid), EPA (Eicosapentaenoic acid), DHA (Docosahexaenoic acid) and DPA (Docosapentaenoic acid).

With ALA, the parent fatty acid found in certain plant oils, the body needs to convert it into EPA and DHA. The problem is that many factors – deficiency in certain vitamins and mineral, aging or disease – interfere with this metabolic conversion. Evidence shows that EPA's role is predominant for lowering triglyceride and reducing platelet activation, while exhibiting key antioxidant properties.

DHA plays a number of biologically important roles, particularly to support the nervous system and neurological functions, for both adults and infants. DHA fuels the brain and a deficiency is associated with depression, hyperactivity, stroke, and Alzheimer disease.

DPA's benefits are proven superior to those of EPA and DHA in inhibiting platelet aggregation and angiogenesis, in healing damaged blood vessels and reducing risks associated with smoking.

While supplementing with EPA, DHA and DPA resembles human milk for infants, for adults it is synergistically more complete as 1/3 of omega-3 circulating in human blood is attributable to DPA.

So if you want to cover your entire basis when it comes to your omega-3s, your best "fats for life" surely seem to be EPA, DHA & DPA!

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