

## **HEART DISEASE - THE REAL SKINNY ON FATS & MORE**

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Last time I hope I helped to pique your curiosity and whet your appetite for more insight into the truth behind heart disease. We are all bombarded – through professional avenues, the mainstream media, and aggressive advertising campaigns – with what at times seems to border on hysterics when it comes to the dangers of high cholesterol. It might even be said that we are left with the notion that the lower our cholesterol the better. What most of us pick up from all of this is a vague sense that cholesterol is a very bad thing, that foods containing cholesterol are very bad foods, and that if we are conscientious we will avoid all of those tasty foods that are so bad for our arteries. Briefly, I tried my best to clean up the tarnished reputation of cholesterol, which is the master steroid hormone sitting at the top of the cascade of hormones that give us life, without which we are dead and without enough of we are sick and tired.

What then, we have to ask, is the role of cholesterol in the development of heart disease? We'll get to that question, but first a bit of background. Over the span of decades, the lining of the arteries – or epithelium – become damaged. This damage is due in large part to inflammatory processes. Lots of the inflammation can be attributed to the oxidation of polyunsaturated fats and trans fatty acids in the diet. Contrary to popular belief, saturated fats from animals – including butter and other dairy foods – are not as easily oxidized as the molecularly unstable polyunsaturated fats, such as vegetable oil. Saturated fats in the form of tropical oils – such as coconut oil, believe it or not – are the highest-quality fats you can incorporate into your diet. Known as medium-chain triglycerides, these shorter-chain fatty acids are metabolized differently than other fats and have been found not only unrelated to the development of heart disease but helpful as a prevention! Trans fats, which are polyunsaturated fats chemically altered to maintain a solid form (margarine, commercial peanut butter, commercially baked goods), are also volatile and unstable, generating rampant free radical production, resulting in damaging inflammation.

Next to the medium-chain fatty acids, monounsaturated fats – such as olive, canola, peanut, and avocado oil – are the most stable and healthy. Unfortunately, the average American diet is laden with the inferior vegetable oils and trans-fatty forms of them, sometimes in a mistaken effort to eat a more healthy diet! Again, these are potent generators of free radicals within the bloodstream.

So what else wears down the epithelial arterial walls? Well...simply doing their job! The arteries that lead to and from the heart are very hard workers, as I am sure you understand, continuously pumping and pumping and pumping, hour after hour after hour, day after day after day, year after year after year, decade... you get my drift! Even if someone takes such excellent care of their health that they never develop a degenerative disease and live an incredibly long lifespan, heart disease will most likely be what causes death eventually, simply because the hoses finally wear out! That isn't my original analogy – the author of an article I recently read suggested thinking of an artery as a hose that gets stepped on 70 times a minute non-stop, on and on and on. That makes a lot of sense, now doesn't it?

Now, and this is the fun part. Picture the damaged arterial linings as a skin surface with scratches and wounds. What happens when you are scratched, cut, or suffer a puncture wound? Your body will ingeniously form a scab to patch up the damage and further protect you from the dangers of an open wound, right? Well in similar fashion, if your arterial walls are no longer smooth but cracked and creviced, your body will ingeniously form a plaque with which to patch it up and prevent something worse from developing. Unfortunately, the plaque that develops can then proceed to block that artery, leading to a cardiovascular event. Contrary to popular belief, arterial plaque contains very little cholesterol or saturated fat; most of the material is a calcium deposit akin to lime, and the fatty acids are unsaturated.

Still, the rationale behind modern medicine's efforts to keep the blood from getting sticky and forming plaque in an effort to prevent heart disease does make some sense. I guess the thought is that if arterial damage exists, then maybe we can prolong life by stopping the natural formation of plaque for as long as possible. However, as Noble Laureate Linus Pauling noted, removing plaque before the arterial wall is healed is like pulling the scab from a wound. In future editions I will be explaining his heart-disease prevention strategy, but for now let's stay with this idea and recognize that the standard of care is not ideal when it comes to heart disease prevention because it simply doesn't get at the "root!"

Can't wait to tell you more, but just to keep you interested: If cholesterol levels – fats simply congealing in the bloodstream along with sticky blood platelets – are primarily responsible for heart attacks, then why in bypass surgery are the veins harvested from the legs free of plaque in a person with obvious atherosclerotic heart disease? Hint: Ka-thump, ka-thump, ka-thump... Ah! ...and this: Why does Dr. Schwarzbein (*The Schwarzbein Principle*) insist that the only "low cholesterol diet" is one that is *high* in cholesterol. I'll bet you just can't stand it... See you next time!

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