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10 Proven Health Benefits of Coconut Oil (No. 3 is Best)

By Kris Gunnars | 1,953,838 views

Coconut oil is one of the few foods that can be classified as a "superfood."

Its unique combination of fatty acids can have profound positive effects on health.

This includes fat loss, better brain function and various other **amazing benefits.**

Here are the top 10 health benefits of coconut oil that have been experimentally confirmed in human studies.

1. Coconut Oil Contains a Unique Combination of Fatty Acids With Powerful Medicinal Properties

Coconut oil has been demonized in the past because it contains saturated fat. In fact, coconut oil is one of the richest sources of saturated fat known to man, with almost 90% of the fatty acids in it being saturated (1).

However, new data is showing that saturated fats are **harmless**. Many massive studies that include hundreds of thousands of people prove that the whole "artery-clogging" idea was a myth (2).

Additionally, coconut oil doesn't contain your average run-of-the-mill saturated fats like you would find in cheese or steak.

No, they contain so-called Medium Chain Triglycerides (MCTs) – which are fatty acids of a medium length.

Most of the fatty acids in the diet are long-chain fatty acids, but the medium-chain fatty acids in coconut oil are metabolized differently.

They go straight to the liver from the digestive tract, where they are used as a quick source energy or turned into so-called ketone bodies, which can have therapeutic effects on brain disorders like epilepsy and Alzheimer's.

Bottom Line: Coconut oil contains a lot of medium chain triglycerides, which are metabolized differently and can have therapeutic effects on several brain disorders.

2. Populations That Eat a LOT of Coconut Are Among The Healthiest People on The Planet

Coconut is kind of an "exotic" food in the Western world, primarily consumed by health conscious people.

However, in some parts of the world, coconut is a dietary staple that people have **thrived** on for many generations.

The best example of such a population is theTokelauans, which live in the South Pacific.

They eat over 60% of their calories from coconuts and are the biggest consumers of saturated fat in the world.

These people are in **excellent** health, with **no evidence** of heart disease (3).

Another example of a population that eats a lot of coconut and remains in excellent health is the Kitavans (4).

Bottom Line: Plenty of populations around the world have thrived for multiple generations eating massive amounts of coconut.

3. Coconut Oil Can Increase Your Energy Expenditure, Helping You Burn More Fat

Obesity is currently one of the biggest health problems in the world.

While some people think obesity is only a matter of calories, others (myself included) believe that **the sources** of those calories are critical too.

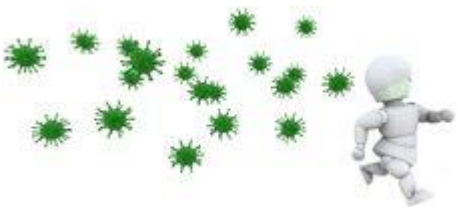
It is a fact that different foods affect our bodies and hormones in different ways. In this regard, a calorie is NOT a calorie.

The medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) in coconut oil can increase energy expenditure compared to the same amount of calories from longer chain fats (5, 6).

One study found that 15-30 grams of MCTs per day increased 24 hour energy expenditure by 5%, **totalling about 120 calories per day** (7).

Bottom Line: The medium chain triglycerides in coconut oil have been shown to increase 24 hour energy expenditure by as much as 5%, potentially leading to significant weight loss over the long term.

4. The Lauric Acid in Coconut Oil Can Kill Bacteria, Viruses and Fungi, Helping to Stave Off Infections



Almost 50% of the fatty acids in coconut oil is the 12-carbon Lauric Acid.

When coconut oil is enzymatically digested, it also forms a monoglyceride called monolaurin.

Both lauric acid and monolaurin can kill harmful pathogens like bacteria, viruses and fungi (8).

For example, these substances have been shown to kill the bacteria Staphylococcus Aureus (a **very dangerous** pathogen) and the yeast Candida Albicans, a common source of yeast infections in humans (9, 10).

Bottom Line: The fatty acids and breakdown products in coconut oil can kill harmful pathogens, potentially helping to prevent infections.

5. Coconut Oil Can Kill Your Hunger, Making You Eat Less Without Even Trying

One interesting feature of coconut oil is that it can reduce your hunger.

This may be related to the way the fatty acids in it are metabolized, because ketone bodies can have an appetite reducing effect (11).

In one study, varying amounts of medium and long chain triglycerides were fed to 6 healthy men.

The men eating the most MCTs ate **256 fewer calories** per day, on average (12).

Another study in 14 healthy men discovered that those who ate the most MCTs at breakfast ate **significantly fewer calories at lunch** (13).

These studies were small and only done for a short period of time. If this effect were to persist over the long term, it could have a dramatic influence on body weight over a period of several years.

Bottom Line: The fatty acids in coconut oil can significantly reduce appetite, which may positively affect body weight over the long term.

6. The Fatty Acids in Coconut Oil Are Turned into Ketones, Which Can Reduce Seizures

A so-called ketogenic (very low carb, very high fat) diet is currrently being studied to treat various disorders.

The best known therapeutic application of this diet is treating drug-resistant epilepsy in children (14).

This diet involves eating very little carbohydrates and large amounts of fat, leading to greatly increased concentrations ofketone bodies in the blood.

For some reason, this diet can **dramatically reduce** the rate of seizures in epileptic children, even those who haven't had success with multiple different types of drugs.

Because the MCTs in coconut oil get shipped to the liver and turned into ketone bodies, they are often used in epileptic patients to induce ketosis while allowing for a bit more carbs in the diet (15, 16).

Bottom Line: The MCTs in coconut oil can increase blood concentration of ketone bodies, which can help reduce seizures in epileptic children.

7. Coconut Oil Can Improve Blood Cholesterol Levels and May Lower Your Risk of Heart Disease

Coconut oil is loaded with saturated fats, which actually do not harm the blood lipid profile like previously thought.

Saturated fats raise HDL (the good) cholesterol and change the LDL cholesterol to a benign subtype (17, 18).

In one study in 40 women, coconut oil reduced Total and LDL cholesterol while increasing HDL compared to soybean oil (19).

There are also rat studies showing that coconut oil reduces triglycerides, total and LDL cholesterol, increases HDL and improves blood coagulation factors and antioxidant status (20, 21).

This improvement in cardiovascular risk factors should theoretically lead to a reduced risk of heart disease over the long term.

Bottom Line: Studies in both humans and rats show that coconut oil improves important risk factors like Total, LDL and HDL cholesterol, which may translate to a reduced risk of heart disease.

8. Coconut Oil Can Protect Hair Against Damage, Moisturize Skin and Function as Sunscreen

Coconut oil can serve various purposes that have nothing to do with eating it.

Many people are using it for cosmetic purposes and to improve the health and appearance of their skin and hair.

Studies on individuals with dry skin show that coconut oil can improve the moisture and lipid content of the skin (22).

Coconut oil can also be very protective against hair damage and one study shows effectiveness as sunscreen, blocking about 20% of the sun's ultraviolet rays (23, 24)

Another application is using it like mouthwash in a process called oil pulling, which can kill some of the harmful bacteria in the mouth, improve dental health and reduce bad breath (25, 26, 27).

Bottom Line: Coconut oil can be applied topically as well, studies showing it to be effective as a skin moisturizer and protecting against hair damage. It can also be used as a mild form of sunscreen and as mouthwash.

9. The Fatty Acids in Coconut Oil Can Boost Brain Function in Alzheimer's Patients

Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia worldwide and occurs primarily in elderly individuals.

In Alzheimer's patients, there appears to be a reduced ability to use glucose for energy in certain parts of the brain.

Ketone bodies can supply energy for the brain and researchers have speculated that ketones can provide an alternative energy source for these malfunctioning cells and reduce symptoms of Alzheimer's (28).

In one 2006 study, consumption of medium chain triglycerides led to **immediate improvement** in brain function in patients with milder forms of Alzheimer's (29).

Other studies support these findings and medium chain triglycerides are being intensively studied as potential therapeutic agents in Alzheimer's disease (30, 31).

Bottom Line: Studies show that the fatty acids in coconut oil can increase blood levels of ketone bodies, supplying energy for the brain cells of Alzheimer's patients and relieving symptoms.

10. Coconut Oil Can Help You Lose Fat, Especially The Dangerous Fat in Your Abdominal Cavity

Given that coconut oil can reduce appetite and increase fat burning, it makes sense that it can also help you lose weight.

Coconut oil appears to be especially effective in reducing abdominal fat, which lodges in the abdominal cavity and around organs.

This is the most dangerous fat of all and is highly associated with many Western diseases.

Waist circumference is easily measured and is a great marker for the amount of fat in the abdominal cavity.

A study in 40 women with abdominal obesity, supplementing with 30 mL (1 ounce) ofcoconut oil per day lead to a significant reduction in both BMI and waist circumference in a period of 12 weeks (19).

Another study in 20 obese males noted a reduction in waist circumference of 2.86 cm (1.1 inches) after 4 weeks of 30 mL (1 ounce) of coconut oil per day (32).

This number may not seem too impressive on the surface, but be aware that these people aren't adding exercise or restricting calories. They're losing significant amounts of abdominal fat **simply by adding coconut oil** to their diet.

11. Anything Else?

If you want to buy coconut oil, then there is an excellent selection on Amazon with thousands of customer reviews that are fun to browse through.

It is also available in most health food stores.

If you want to enjoy the health benefits outlined in the article, then you must get organic, virgin coconut oil... NOT the refined stuff.

This is really just the tip of the iceberg. People are using coconut oil for all sorts of things with incredible success.

Top 8 Reasons Not to Fear Saturated Fats

By Kris Gunnars | 53,606 views

 Humans have been eating saturated fats for hundreds of thousands of years.

They were demonized a few decades ago and claimed to cause heart disease, but new data shows that to be completely false.

Here are the top 8 reasons not to fear saturated fats.

1. Saturated Fats Increase The Size of LDL Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a molecule that is absolutely vital to life.

Every cell membrane in our bodies is loaded with it. It is used to make hormones like cortisol, testosterone and estradiol.

Without cholesterol, we would die... and our bodies have developed elaborate mechanisms to manufacture it, to make sure we always have enough.

But a protein that carries cholesterol in the blood, Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL), has been associated with an elevated risk of heart disease.

However, new data shows that there are subtypes of LDL:

- **Small, Dense LDL:** Particles that are small, dense and can easily penetrate the arterial wall (1, 2, 3).
- **Large LDL:** Particles that are large and fluffy like cotton balls. These particles are NOT associated with an elevated risk of heart disease (4, 5).

Saturated fats raise the large subtype of LDL… which means that the cholesterol-raising effects of saturated fats (which are mild) are **irrelevant** (6, 7).

Bottom Line: Saturated Fats only mildly elevate Large LDL, a benign subtype of LDL that is not associated with heart disease.

2. Saturated Fats Raise HDL Cholesterol

A fact that is often ignored in the fear mongering against saturated fats, is that they also affect another type of cholesterol… HDL.

HDL (High Density Lipoprotein) is also known as the "good" cholesterol.

It transports cholesterol away from the arteries and towards the liver, where it may be either excreted or reused.

The higher your HDL levels, the lower your risk of heart disease… and saturated fats raise blood levels of HDL (8, 9, 10).

Bottom Line: Eating saturated fats raises blood levels of HDL (the "good") cholesterol, which should lower your risk of heart disease.

3. Saturated Fats Do Not Cause Heart Disease

A massive review article published in 2010 examined data from 21 studies and a total of 347.747 individuals.

They found absolutely **no association** between saturated fat and the risk of heart disease (11).

Other systematic reviews that look at the evidence as a whole found literally no evidence of an association (12, 13).

No, the idea that saturated fat caused heart disease was amyth all along, based on flawed studies by biased scientists that were in love with their theories.

Somehow this became *common knowledge* and both the media and health professionals accepted it as a fact that "artery-clogging saturated fat" was harmful.

Bottom Line: There is absolutely no evidence that eating saturated fat is associated with heart disease. It is a myth that was never proven.

4. Saturated Fats May Lower The Risk of Stroke

A stroke is caused by a disturbance in blood flow to the brain.

Strokes can damage brain tissue and are among the most common causes of disability and death in western countries.

In fact, strokes are the second leading cause of death in middle- and high-income countries, right after heart disease.

There are multiple studies showing that saturated fat consumption is associated with a reduced risk of stroke, although it isn't always statistically significant (14, 15).

Bottom Line: Stroke is one of the leading causes of death. Several studies show that saturated fat consumption is associated with a reduced risk of stroke.

5. Saturated Fats Don't Damage Easily in High Heat

Saturated fats are much less likely to react with oxygen than unsaturated fats.

Unsaturated fats, especially polyunsaturates, contain many double bonds and are therefore especially prone to oxidation (16).

When unsaturated fats react with oxygen during high heat cooking, they form toxic byproducts and go rancid.

Therefore, saturated fats like butter and coconut oil are better options when you need to cook something at a high heat.

Bottom Line: For high-heat cooking, saturated fats are the best choice because they are more stable and don't react with oxygen as easily.

6. Foods With Saturated Fats Are Nutritious

There are many healthy foods that are naturally rich in saturated fat. These foods tend to be highly nutritious and contain an abundance of fat soluble vitamins.

Prime examples are meats, eggs, organs and high-fat dairy products. The key here is to eat animals that ate foods that were natural to them, such as grass-fed cows.

Grass-fed beef, pastured eggs and dairy from grass-fed cows are much more nutritious than their "conventionally" raised counterparts. They are especially rich in fat soluble vitamins like Vitamin A, E and K2 (17, 18, 19, 20, 21).

Bottom Line: Natural foods that contain saturated fats are usually very nutritious and especially rich in fat soluble vitamins.

7. Diets High in Saturated Fat Are Good For Weight Loss

We often hear that “high fat diets” make you fat.

It’s only half-true, though.

These diets are fattening… but it’s because they usually contain sugar and refined carbs as well, NOT just a lot fat.

Diets that are high in fat but **also low in carbs** actually have the opposite effect.

Low-carbohydrate diets, which are usually high in saturated fat, actually make you lose MORE weight than diets that are low in fat. They also improve ALL biomarkers of health much more than low-fat diets (22, 23, 24).

8. Saturated Fat Tastes Amazing

Bacon, cheese, meat, eggs, butter… a life rich in saturated fat sure as hell beats a life without it.

It Ain't The Fat, People!

By Kris Gunnars | 37,645 views

The health authorities have been telling us for decades that saturated fat raises the risk of heart disease.

For this reason, we've been told to avoid foods like meat, eggs, coconuts and dairy products.

The theory goes like this:

1. Saturated fat raises LDL cholesterol in the blood.
2. LDL cholesterol lodges in the arteries, causing atherosclerosis and eventually, heart disease.

This is also known as the diet-heart hypothesis.

This theory has **never been proven**, despite it having been the cornerstone of dietary recommendations since 1977 (1).

Cholesterol and The Risk of Heart Disease

When referring to cholesterol, be it LDL or HDL, we're actually not talking about the cholesterol itself.

LDL stands for Low Density **Lipoprotein** and HDL for High Density **Lipoprotein**.

The lipoproteins are proteins that carry fat, cholesterol, phospholipids and fat soluble vitamins around in the bloodstream.

The thing with cholesterol (or more accurately, the lipoproteins that carry around the cholesterol) is that elevated blood levels of it are associated with an increased risk of heart disease.

This does not necessarily mean that high cholesterol causes heart disease, just that people who have a lot of cholesterol are more likely to get it (2, 3).

This graph from the massive MRFIT study (4) clearly shows that in men, total cholesterol above 240 mg/dL (6.2 mmol/L) is associated with an increased risk of death, specifically from heart disease.

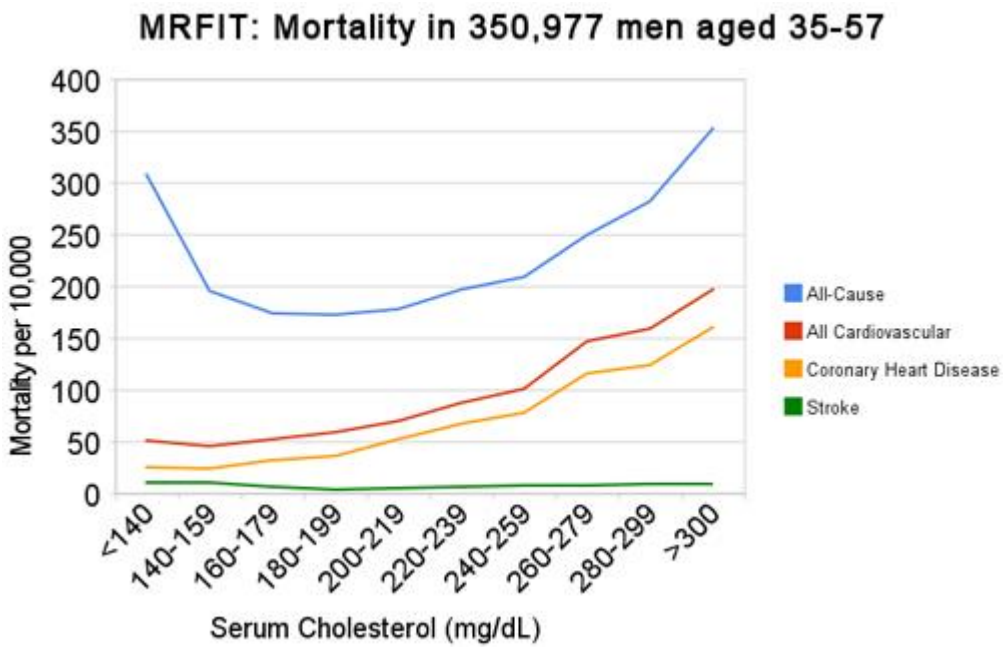


Photo source.

However, it's important to note that cholesterol that is **too low** is also associated with an increased risk of death, but not from heart disease (5, 6, 7).

The relationship between total cholesterol and cardiovascular disease is complex. For example, in very old individuals, more cholesterol appears to be protective (8, 9).

The Type of Cholesterol Matters

It is now well acknowledged that the **type of cholesterol** matters.

We have HDL (High Density Lipoprotein) which is called the "good" cholesterol, and is associated with a lower risk of heart disease (10, 11, 12, 13).

Then we have LDL, also known as the "bad" cholesterol, associated with an increased risk (14, 15, 16).

However, the situation gets even more complicated than that. It turns out that there are subtypes of LDL, specifically relating to the size of the particles.

It is now known that the size of the LDL particles is of **critical importance.**

People who have mostly small, dense LDL particles are at a much greater risk of heart disease than those who have mainly large LDL particles (17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22).

Scientists now realize that the number of LDL particles (LDL-p) is more important than their total concentration (LDL-c). The greater your LDL particle number, the more likely you are to have mostly small, dense LDL particles (23, 24, 25).

Bottom Line: The relationship between cholesterol and heart disease is complex. HDL is associated with a lower risk, while small, dense LDL particles are associated with a greater risk.

Saturated Fats Don't Raise LDL That Much... if at All

The first part of the diet-heart hypothesis is that saturated fats raise blood levels of LDL cholesterol.

However, despite this idea being so deeply ingrained in the minds of laypeople and health professionals alike, there is**no clear link.**

Some short-term feeding trials do in fact show that increased saturated fats raise LDL in the short term.

However, the effect is weak and inconsistent and many of these studies have been criticized based on methodological flaws (26, 27, 28).

If saturated fats were such a **dominant factor** in LDL, the association should be strong and consistent in observational studies, but it's not.

In fact, plenty of studies don't support an association between saturated fat consumption and total LDL (29, 30, 31).

There are populations in the world that eat a massive amount of saturated fat, such as the Masai in Africa who drink lots of fatty milk and the Tokelauans who eat lots ofcoconuts (32, 33, 34, 35).

Both of these populations have low cholesterol and an absence of heart disease.

Bottom Line: If saturated fat really raises LDL, then the effect is weak and inconsistent. Saturated fat is certainly not a dominant factor in LDL levels.

Saturated Fats Don't Harm The Blood Lipid Profile

If you take into account the size of the LDL particles, you see that saturated fat doesn't actually harm the blood lipid profile… it improves it!

Studies show that:

- Saturated fats shift the LDL cholesterol from small, dense LDL to large LDL – which should lower the risk of heart disease (36, 37, 38).
- Saturated fats raise HDL, which should also lower the risk (39, 40, 41, 42).

The small, dense LDL particles are much more likely to become oxidized and lodged in the arteries (43, 44, 45).

If saturated fats reduce the small, dense LDL particles and raise HDL, then they should **decrease the risk** of heart disease, not the other way around.

Bottom Line: Saturated fats shift the LDL particles from small, dense to Large and raise HDL. If anything, this should decrease the risk of heart disease.

Low-Fat Diets Make Your Cholesterol WORSE

The low-fat diet that is commonly recommended by the health authorities is a miserable failure. In the beginning, there were only observational studies backing it up. Since then, many controlled trials have been conducted.

This diet actually makes the blood lipid profile **worse, not better.**

Controlled trials show that low-fat diets reduce the size of the LDL particles, while low-carb, high-fat diets increase them (46, 47, 48, 49).

For this reason, low-fat diets have a net harmful effect on the blood lipid profile, while low-carb diets have a positive effect.

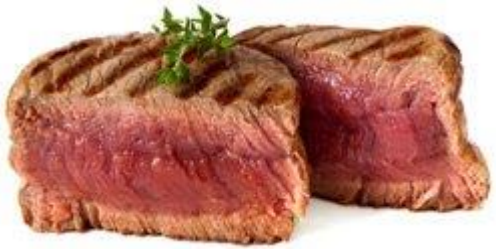
Low-fat diets can also reduce blood levels of HDL (the "good) cholesterol (50, 51, 52).

Eating a lot of carbohydrates is a great way to increase blood levels of triglycerides, another important risk factor. Low-fat, high-carb diets can raise blood triglycerides (53, 54, 55).

Low HDL and high triglycerides are two components of the metabolic syndrome, which is a stepping stone towards obesity, type II diabetes and heart disease.

Bottom Line: A decrease in HDL cholesterol and LDL particle size, along with an increase in triglycerides, should all lead to an increased risk of heart disease.

Saturated Fats and Heart Disease – Where is The Proof?



If saturated fats caused heart disease, then people who eat more saturated fats should be at a greater risk… but they aren't.

Review articles of prospective observational studies don't see **any associations.**

One study published in 2010 that looked at 21 studies with a total of 347.747 individuals concluded (56):

"A meta-analysis of prospective epidemiologic studies showed that there is no significant evidence for concluding that dietary saturated fat is associated with an increased risk of CHD or CVD."

Other reviews of the evidence lead to the same conclusion. There is no link between consumption of saturated fat and the risk of cardiovascular disease (57, 58).

But observational studies can't really prove anything, they can only demonstrate correlation. So we can't exonerate saturated fat based on such studies alone.

Evidence From Randomized Controlled Trials

Fortunately, we do also have randomized controlled trials. Such studies are considered the "gold standard" of research.

The Women's Health Iniative is the largest randomized controlled trial on diet in history. In this study, 48.835 postmenopausal women were randomized into a low-fat diet group and a control group who continued to eat the standard western diet.

After a period of 8.1 years, there was **no difference** in the rate of cardiovascular disease between the two groups (59). The diet did not work for weight loss, breast cancer or colorectal cancer either (60, 61, 62).

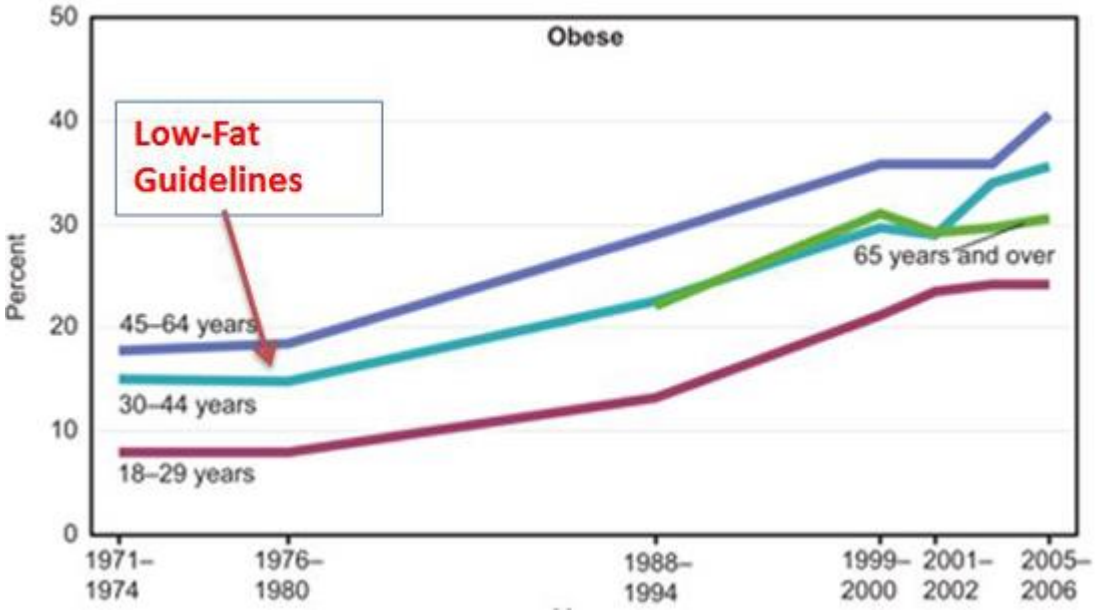
Another massive study, the Multiple Risk Factor Intervention Trial (MRFIT) involved 12.866 men at a **high risk** of heart disease. This is the group of people most likely to see a benefit if the low-fat diet actually worked.

However, after 7 years, there was **no difference** between the men randomized to a low-fat diet and the group eating the standard western diet, despite the fact that more men in the low-fat group also quit smoking (63).

The low-fat diet got tested, it didn't work. Period.

Overall, there is **zero evidence** that saturated fat causes heart disease, or that reducing saturated fat leads to a reduction.

Just for fun, I'd also like to show you this graph of how the obesity epidemic started at the **exact same time** the low-fat dietary guidelines were released to the American public:



Obesity is a major risk factor for heart disease, diabetes and other chronic diseases.

Of course, this graph only shows a correlation and doesn't prove that the low-fat guidelines caused the obesity epidemic, but it's still an interesting observation.

Despite having been repeatedly proven to be ineffective, mainstream health authorities and many nutrition professionals still continue to peddle the low-fat diet.

Bottom Line: There is no evidence that saturated fat increases the risk of heart disease, or that diets low in saturated fat reduce the risk.

Saturated Fats May Lower The Risk of Stroke

Another important cause of death that doesn't get mentioned often in discussions about saturated fat, isstroke... otherwise known as a cerebrovascular accident.

A stroke happens when there is a disruption in blood flow to the brain, either due to a blockage or bleeding.

Strokes are actually the second most common cause of death in the world, accounting for 6.15 million deaths in the year 2008 alone (64).

In 2008, strokes killed 6.15 million, while heart disease killed 7.25 million... judging by these numbers, stroke is almost as significant as heart disease when it comes to mortality in the population.

Observational studies show that saturated fat is associated with a significantly lower risk of stroke, although some studies show no effect (65, 66, 67, 68).

Bottom Line: Consumption of saturated fat is associated with a lower risk of stroke in many studies. Stroke is the second most common cause of death worldwide.

Good Fats, Bad Fats

Of course, there are some bad fats in the diet that actually DO raise the risk of heart disease.

Trans fats are monounsaturated fats that have been put through a hydrogenation process.

This increases the shelf life of the fats and makes them resemble saturated fats in consistency.

Trans fats, found mainly in processed foods, are strongly associated with an increased risk of heart disease (69, 70, 71, 72, 73).

Vegetable oils like soybean and corn oil that are very high in Omega-6 fatty acids and strongly associated with heart disease risk (74, 75, 76, 77, 78).

To lower your risk, eat healthy foods with plenty of saturated and monounsaturated fats. Eat some Omega-3s from fish and grass-fed animals, but **stay away** from trans fats and vegetable oils.

It's Time to Retire The Myth

Thanks to Dr. Stephan Gueyenet and Dr. Axel F Sigurdsson – I found many of the references for this article on their sites.

It's time to retire the decades old myth that saturated fat is in any way related to heart disease.

It wasn't proven in the past, it hasn't been proven today and it never will be proven… because it's just **flat out wrong.**