Fats explained

Our government tells us that unsaturated plant fats are good for us and saturated animal fats are not. This is a little too black and white. Here is the grey area:

Omega-3/6

First off, it is essential that we look at the omega fatty acids in vegetable and animal fats. Next to sugars, it is necessary to reduce your omega-6 intake. Omega-6 is a natural and healthy fatty acid but only at the right ratio to omega-3. We can eat unlimited amounts of omega-3 fats but too many omega-6 fats will inevitably lead to health problems.

The omega-3 to 6 ratios in Paleolithic times was no more than 1:4. What is it today? Anything from 1:20 to a staggering 1:50!

Time, therefore, to up your omega-3 intake and lower your omega-6 intake. Eat fewer grains and avoid grain-based oils such as corn oil. Other omega-6 oils which are best avoided are soya oil and sunflower oil. Commercial meat and dairy comes from animals fed grain pellets and therefore also contain too much omega-6. Besides the animals' suffering and the antibiotics, growth hormones, and the GMO's they get, this is another reason to choose organic, grass-fed meat and dairy. Cows are supposed to eat grass and clover. So are pigs. Did you know chickens also eat grass?

So where do we get all these omega-3 fats? Eat anything with green leaves. Green leafy vegetables are an excellent source of omega-3, particularly when raw. For cooking, also use green veggies, such as kale, sprouts, broccoli, etc. Other vegetable fats containing omega-3 are flaxseed oil and walnut oil. Be careful, though, as these oils do not allow themselves to be heated. Use only extra virgin olive oil for this or use olive oil cold. The best animal source of omega-3 is wild fatty

fish and cod-liver or krill oil. These contain the long-chain EPA and DHA omega-3 fats.

Saturated Fats

For years we have been hearing that saturated fats are bad because they increase cholesterol levels. This is a persistent myth. In Asian, African and South American countries people cook with butter, coconut oil, and lard all the time and look at the health of these people!

Saturated fats can withstand high temperatures and can be used multiple times and are therefore perfectly suited for frying. The best fats for frying are butter, coconut oil and olive oil. Natural saturated fats (animal fats but also plant fats like coconut fat) are processed by the body without difficulty and are not fattening. What makes people fat and unhealthy are sugar and refined oils (trans fats). By all means, help yourself to an egg fried in butter, full-fat yogurt.

Trans Fats

Trans fats are the missing link between unsaturated and saturated fats. It is not saturated fats which are the enemy but trans fats. It is a man made fats and does not exist in nature. Trans fatty acids are formed by solidifying cheaply available unsaturated plant fats like sunflower oil, soya oil, corn oil, peanut oil, etc. Through a heating process, the liquid is extracted from these fats, either in part or whole. Then a hydrogen atom is added. This results in the transformation of unsaturated fatty acids into saturated fatty acids, a kind not found in nature and which is alien to the body. When you consume these fats, your body does not know what to do with them, giving them free range to form free radicals and cause damage even at the cellular (DNA) level!

Which products contain trans fats? It's better to ask which ones do not nowadays. Frying oil, potato chips, coffee creamer, biscuits, cakes

- chances are they contain hydrogenated or partly hydrogenated fats. Even peanut butter is no longer exempt. And it isn't just foods either: make sure you also read the labels of vitamin supplements, ointments, creams, gels, lotions, and cosmetics – even the ones you buy in health-food stores. It is very important that you check the labels for these and other ingredients. You will find empty foods very often also contain sugar, salt, flavour enhancers and chemical sweeteners to hide the fact that they taste like cardboard. Food should be prepared in a kitchen, not in a lab.

Interestingly enough, trans fats are not completely unnatural. Meat and dairy from hoofed grazing animals (ruminants) naturally contains 2 to 3% trans fats. Tests have been done to measure the potential harmful effects of natural and unnatural trans fats. Natural trans fats turned out to be completely harmless, whereas chemical trans fats did prove harmful to natural organisms, even though they looked identical under the microscope. Nobody knows why this is. My guess is other micronutrients play a role in canceling the potentially harmful effects of natural trans fats in, for example, butter. We see the same mechanism at work with the caffeine in green tea. Nature works in complex synergistic wholes, never with isolates. We are only beginning to discover the complex interaction of these micronutrients.

The deadly cocktail of sugars and trans fats is responsible for the many health challenges we face today. Our blood and blood flow suffer particularly because of their devastating effect on the liver, guts, kidneys and heart. No wonder so many of our modern diseases affect exactly those organs.