

Good Fat Verses Bad Fat

Well, here it is the beginning of a new year and along with that comes our list of New Year's Resolutions! If your list is like mine, it is quite lengthy with lots of ideas to improve my health. Most of our health issues stem from the types of foods we eat. So over the next few weeks I would like to share with you some ways to make wiser food choices.

Janet M. Pollard, MPH and Carol A. Rice, Ph.D., R.N., editors of Health Hints, a Texas AgriLife Extension publication, have put together a wonderful article discussing ways to improve our heart health. A good starting place is to understand that totally cutting fats from your diet is not good, but rather learn to substitute good fats for bad fats.

Good fats are those that are unsaturated and bad fats are trans and saturated. Sometimes these terms are confusing when we are trying to determine which foods fall into each particular category. According to the American Heart Association, saturated fats are found mostly in foods from animals and some plants. Animal foods include beef, beef fat, veal, lamb, pork, lard, poultry fat, butter, cream, milk, cheeses and other dairy products made from whole and 2 percent milk. Plants that contain saturated fat include coconut oil, palm oil, palm kernel oil, and cocoa butter.

Trans-fatty acids are also considered a bad fat and should be limited to less than 1 percent of your total daily calories. These fats are formed during hydrogenation, which is used to make margarine, shortening, cooking oils, and foods made from these products. You can check the Nutrition Facts label on foods to determine the trans fat content of the food.

Some fat is needed for your body to function correctly, so you can't completely cut out your fats, you simply need to limit them properly. The American Heart Association's Nutrition Committee strongly advises these fat guidelines for healthy American's over age 2:

Limit total fat intake to less than 25-35 percent of your total calories each day;

Limit saturated fat intake to less than 7 percent of total daily calories;

Limit trans fat intake to less than 1 percent of total daily calories;

The remaining fat should come from sources of monosaturated and polyunsaturated fats such as nuts seeds, fish, and vegetable oils; and limit cholesterol intake to less than 300 mg per day, for most people. If you have coronary heart disease or your LDL cholesterol level is 100 mg/dL or greater, limit your cholesterol intake to less than 200 milligrams a day.

Next week I will discuss some specific tips to accomplishing the above mentioned guidelines. For more information, visit <http://fcs.tamu.edu> or call the Texas AgriLife Extension office at 903/473-5000, ext. 157.