

High Altitude Fats

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No, I'm not talking about the latest trend in powder skis. I'm talking about the HUGE role that fats play in your body...especially athletic, in the sun, working-the-elements' bodies.

Fat phobic? Good. That's where I have the most fun re-educating people. For more than twenty years I have been coaching clients, family, and friends, to re-think fats and learn to properly incorporate them into their diet. I love to say, "I told you so", as the media begins to report what many of us in the holistic health care field have been preaching for years.

Are you always hungry? Fats are an important energy source, slowing your digestion time and giving you a sense of satiety. Good dietary fats help your body metabolize all fats properly. Strange, but it's true. Many people, following the current advice to shun fats and eat a carbohydrate rich/low fat diet, gain weight. When switched to a balanced diet with appropriate fat content, those same people lose weight and eliminate their food cravings.

Do you have dry, itchy skin no matter how much water you consume or lotion you apply? Fats provide essential building blocks for cell membranes. Your skin, hair, nails, arteries, nerves and your thermal layer all depend upon good fats to be healthy.

Has arthritis slowed you down? Fats are needed for lubrication of joints and proper mineral absorption. What many people don't realize is that, when minerals are not absorbed properly, the body often tucks them in neat, little, out of the way places - like your joints.

Hot flashes? Fats play a vital role in hormones, especially your sex hormones. Many of my clients have reduced or eliminated their hot flashes by adding an appropriate Essential Fat (EFA) to their daily diet. EFAs are those fats we need to get from our diet since our body can't produce them. Think Flax, Borage, Evening Primrose and fish oil. Menstrual cramps? They can become a fleeting memory.

How about brain function? Have terms such as "ADD, ADHD, or memory loss" crept into your vocabulary? Your brain, composed of 60 percent fat, is strongly affected by the fats you eat. Attend to the obvious culprits - sugar, food allergens, MSG and other food additives, but also examine your fat intake before assuming you have a Ritalin deficiency or are facing early senility.

Now there are "good fats" and "bad fats". "**Good fats**" are those found in nature such as REAL butter (raw and organic is best), Extra Virgin Cold Pressed olive

oil, cold water fish oils, flax, sesame, walnut and safflower oils, avocado, nuts and even the saturated (yes!) fats of animal and coconut origin. Saturated fats play an important role in body chemistry and good health, contributing to cell integrity, aiding calcium absorption, and enhancing the immune system with their antimicrobial properties.

“**Bad fats**” are the man-made ones. As with all foods, the more we tamper with them, the less our bodies are able to recognize their chemical makeup. Havoc ensues when the body tries, and often fails, to use them. Trans-fats include hydrogenated oils, Crisco, margarines, the “I Can’t Believe It’s Not Butter” substitutes, and the genetically modified, highly processed, and highly touted canola oil. Even farm raised fish and beef, fed grains unnatural to their diet, produce distorted fatty acid content in their flesh. Stick to free-range, grass-fed, and wild animal/fish proteins and fats whenever possible. The culprit in the decline of our health, is not, as we’ve been led to believe, animal and saturated fats. As we’ve replaced these natural fats with fat substitutes and carbohydrates, heart disease and high cholesterol, rare in America before 1920, have become all-consuming health concerns. After balancing their diet, reducing their refined carbohydrate intake, and adding appropriate fats to their diets, many clients have reported improved cholesterol levels. Here are a few practical suggestions.

- Avoid the “trans” and fake fats. Use real butter. Ideally, make your own salad dressings using olive, seed, nut or flax oils.
- Use Extra Virgin olive oil, a natural anti-inflammatory. To help relieve muscle soreness from a sprain/strain or after a workout, mountain climb or hard ski, apply the oil topically and allow it to soak in.
- Flax oil – 1 TBS per day. A few cautions - keep it refrigerated and don’t use it for cooking, Use in salad dressings, atop vegetables, in a smoothie or alone. This essential fat aids in reducing “bad” cholesterol, hot flashes, joint pain, enhances hormone production, and even prevents overexposure to the sun.
- Wheat Germ oil contains a natural cell oxygenation factor helpful to athletes.
- Use full fat products which help our bodies properly absorb the calcium in our dairy products.

Nourishing Traditions by Sally Fallon and Know Your Fats by Mary Enig, PhD are both excellent books that will help you learn more about fats and how to properly incorporate them into your diet. On the web, www.mercola.com is a good site. I also invite you to make an appointment with me. We’ll work together to create a personal food plan, appropriate to your lifestyle. ***Bon appetit!***