

# "Facts about Fats"



I recently had a client approach me about "fats." She was concerned about the amount of saturated fat listed on her package of flax seeds. She was adding flax seeds to her diet in order to promote good bowel health, but she was now concerned that these fats may be harmful instead of beneficial. After I explained to her the "facts about fats", I decided to use our conversation as my topic for this month's Highlander article.

In our society today, we are bombarded with information and quite often, much of this information tends to be more confusing rather than simplifying. For example, the subject of "fats" within the food industry swings both left and right.

The food industry provides validated research stating that some fats are bad for humans as they contribute to heart disease, some cancers, our waistline and how we behave. The same industry also provides information stating that some fats are good for us and are actually necessary and important in declogging arteries, helping our brain function and promoting good digestion and absorption. The question becomes, for optimal health, *"Which fats are good and which fats are bad?"* The next question is, *"Are you ready for this?"*

Every cell membrane of the body requires fat. Some examples are skin, brain, bowels, kidneys and joints. Fats or "Fatty Acids" are classified as being "Saturated" or "Unsaturated."

Unsaturated fats are further broken down into "Monounsaturated" or "Polyunsaturated."

Most researchers agree that the Essential Fatty Acids (EFA's) are polyunsaturated fats which the body cannot synthesize and must be acquired in small quantities from dietary sources. EFA's are broken down further into the Omega Families.

There is the Omega-3 Family which consists of Alpha-Linolenic Acid (ALA) found in green leafy vegetables, flaxseed oil, canola oil, walnuts and brazil nuts. There is the Eicosapentaenoic Acid (EPA) which the body manufactures from ALA but also comes from wild ocean fish. There is

Docosahexaenoic Acid (DHA) which the body may convert from ALA and are also found in wild ocean fish.

The Omega-6 Family of Linoleic Acid (LA) are found in vegetable oils, seeds and nuts. Gamma-Linoleic Acid (GLA) which the body makes from LA is also found in primrose oil and borage oil. Arachidonic Acid (AA) is converted from LA and is found in meat.

The Omega-9 Family is actually a monounsaturated fat and is not classed as an EFA as the body can manufacture this fat.

Trans fats are Polyunsaturated fats which have been heated and mixed with nickel powder which allows the oil to become more user friendly in the food industry. These types of fats are found in margarine, crackers, cookies, doughnuts, French fries, potato chips, pastries and other sweets. The human body, through its design, tends to recognize these heated fats as being foreign but instead of rejecting them, the body builds these fats into the cell walls which in turn can create a disturbance in cell function if too many of these fats are consumed.

Some documentation in the food industry states that Saturated fats are the same as Trans fats and therefore should be avoided. Facts are, these fats are not the same.

Saturated fats are natural occurring fats such as found in flax seeds whereas Trans fats are completely unnatural.

Science is providing more evidence now to suggest that the body requires Saturated fats at an optimum level of 10% of the daily diet .

Saturated fats have been consumed by humans for millions of years whereas Trans fats have only been introduced into our diet in the last century.

Saturated fats are needed for various body functions such as enhancing immunity, preserving cell integrity, increasing levels of HDL (so called good cholesterol), decreasing levels of lipoprotein A, a substance associated with heart disease, helping the body convert and utilize Omega- 3's, decreasing inflammation, aiding in healthy lung tissue, promoting fertility and some saturated fats destroy bacteria, virus, fungi and protozoa.

So to my client questioning the saturated fats in her flax seeds, I said enjoy, you are giving your body a treat.