



### **Animal Fats: The Joys and Pain of Eating Meats**

Through the year, Vancouverites enjoy a multiple array of restaurants to choose from with which to satisfy their culinary appetites. Foodies and those who simply love to be “out and about” will often try a new restaurant weekly, sampling a variety of foods from exotic India, spicy Thai, or succulent Mediterranean.

While Vancouver boasts a large number of vegans and vegetarians, there are those amongst us who are die-hard meat lovers. For those in the latter category, a juicy steak is simply heaven! While their taste buds are no doubt tickled to fulfillment, what is often not considered, is the effect of animal meat on one’s health, nor the manner in which these meats are cooked and its impact on the human body.

A number of studies have correlated the intake of animal fats with diseases such as arthritis, atherosclerosis leading to cardiovascular disease and increased risk of strokes. For example, results from the often cited Nurses’ Health Study assessed the dietary fat intake and risk of coronary heart disease in women over a 20 year period. The 2005 study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* revealed that among the 78,778 women studied, the inverse relationship between polyunsaturated fat intake and risk of coronary heart disease were highest among women whose body mass index was  $\geq 25\text{kg/m}^2$ ; similarly, the intake of trans-fat was associated with increased risk of coronary heart disease especially in younger women.

Of note, multiple studies also show that increased animal fat intake contributes to inflammation within blood vessels, contributing to atherosclerotic plaque formation, insulin resistance (pre-diabetes), increased risk of coronary heart disease and strokes.

With the above in mind, it makes plenty of sense therefore, to reduce our intake of animal protein and fats which may ultimately affect our health in the long-term. Rather, focus on increasing your intake of essential fatty acids (good oils) like olive oils or fish oils from salmon and tuna. A higher proportion of fibre and complex carbohydrates like leafy vegetables and whole grains will not only reduce LDL or “bad” cholesterol, it will also contribute to healthy blood sugar, reduced inflammation and ultimately, a reduced risk for cardiovascular disease. In addition, a healthy dose in the form of a glass of red wine with your meal is also beneficial as a source of antioxidants – of course, the fact that a good wine pairing will only serve to enhance your taste buds is simply secondary.

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