

Vegan Fats Of Life, Part 2

Now that we've covered the importance of Essential Fatty Acids in the vegan diet, let's switch gears for a second. Remember when we said there was a big difference between the fats our ancestors ate and the fats most people eat today?

Let's begin with an analogy...

Let's Play Jump Rope

Imagine you and a friend are holding either end of a jump rope (hey, who says we have to grow up?). In order for it to work properly, you let it dangle loosely between you -- now we can have some fun! But if you pull it taut, the fun is over.

This analogy will serve to create a picture in your mind as we further discuss fats.

All fat molecules are composed of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen atoms. The carbon atoms of fatty acids hold together in a **chain-like** fashion. These oxygen/carbon chains can **attach hydrogen** to them at specific points (called receptor points).

Saturated Fats

When each place that can possibly hold a hydrogen atom is filled they are called "saturated". They're full. They don't have room for even one more.

These **saturated fats** are hard fats. The jump rope has been pulled taut...tight and hard. These are fats which are solid at room temperature, such as those found in meat, butter, cheese, and sour cream. Fortunately for us Vegans, we don't touch the stuff! But does this mean your diet is free from saturated fats? Not necessarily...

Saturated fats can be found in Vegan food too, including coconut products*, palm oil and tropical oils. And for those who think eating margarine is okay, think again. Margarine is hydrogenated (which we'll discuss below) and this hydrogenation process actually **converts** the fats to something that **ACTS** like saturated fats in the body. So if you're eating any foods which contain hydrogenated oils, you're ingesting the very saturated fats you're trying to avoid by eating Vegan in the first place! Oy!

When your diet is high in saturated fats or hydrogenated oils, these fats tend to clump together in the body and form deposits. **This is because, just as they**

are hard at room temperature, they are also hard at body temperature. They can lodge in the cells, organs, and blood vessels. This can lead to many health problems including obesity, heart disease, and breast and colon cancer.

* Recent research suggests that coconut oil is a unique medium-chain saturated fat that may actually provide your body with energy versus clogging your arteries. Please do your own research and come to your own conclusions.

Unsaturated Fats

Unsaturated fats have at least two carbon atoms that are next to each other which are not attached to hydrogen atoms. This allows it to bend, leaving the rest of the chain to **loosely rotate** around this kink. Remember our tightened jump rope, saturated fat? Now, as an unsaturated fat that jump rope is getting less taut and more free to move.

When you ingest unsaturated fats, they actually **replace the saturated fats** in your body.

There are two kinds of these unsaturated fats. One is **monosaturated** and one is **polyunsaturated**. Let's look at these two **unsaturated fats** a little more closely...

When at least two pairs of receptor points are empty (meaning they do not have hydrogen attached), they are called **monosaturated fats**, like the kind found in olive oil. When at least two or more pairs of receptor points are empty, those molecules are called **polyunsaturated fats**. Our jump rope is loose and free to move about - wheeeeeeeeeee!!

But not all polyunsaturated fats are equal. Some, like the kind found in safflower and canola oil, should be used sparingly, if at all. The **best polyunsaturates** are the kind that **ALSO** includes Essential Fatty Acids.

So let's round this discussion out in our final installment of *Vegan Fats Of Life, Part 3*, where we'll focus on the healthy fats and how to EASILY add them to your Vegan diet.

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