

Dietary Fat: Friend or Foe?

By Dr. Theresa Tsingis

Most people crave fats to some degree. This makes sense neurologically, as the brain is approximately 60% fat. Which fats keep us healthy...which cause disease? If you understand some basic facts about fats, it becomes easier to know which are good to eat, and which ones would be better reduced in your diet.

First, fats "wear out" in cell structures and must be replaced, usually through diet. Some of these are "essential fats" which the body cannot make in sufficient amounts to maintain health. Second, fats are classified according to their chemical bonding structures. Importantly, the structure of the fat determines how it behaves in our bodies. For example, some fats increase inflammatory states in the body, while others act in the opposite way and decrease inflammation.

Monounsaturated fats have been found to lower cholesterol. Avocados and olives contain those fats as well as naturally occurring vitamin E, which helps to protect cells.



What about saturated fats? Found in meats and dairy products, they have a more rigid chemical structure than plant and fish oils. Saturated fats are best eaten in moderation. Think of it this way -- flexibility is good for cells, not just muscles. Saturated fats can lead to cellular rigidity if eaten in excess, and also induce inflammation and imbalances of cholesterol levels.

Trans fats have gotten much bad press recently, for good reason. They promote inflammation and become free radicals, damaging cells and tissues. Trans



Generally, it is best to eat fats which reduce inflammation. Polyunsaturated omega 3 fats are in this category. They can be found in fish, nuts, flaxseeds, and greens such as arugula. Because a plethora of studies have found mercury and other heavy metals in fish, limiting fish consumption to twice a week and supplementing one's diet with fish oil capsules, may be best. Fish oils contain EPA and DHA (the names of the most beneficial omegas). Studies recommend an adult dosage between 600-1200 mg. EPA and 400-800 mg. DHA.

Omega 6 fats, when eaten in excess, can cause inflammation. They are found in plant oils such as safflower, sunflower, corn, and soy, and are commonly in packaged baked goods. For most people, it is healthier to consume more omega 3's than omega 6's.

Saying Good Night to Insomnia

By Howard VanEs, M.A.

A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book. Irish proverb

Have you had trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep in the last week or so? If so, you are in very good company. In fact 58% of adults in the U.S report having symptoms of insomnia a few nights a week or more (National Sleep Foundation). Symptoms include not being able to get to sleep, frequently waking up during the night, waking up and not being able to get back to sleep, waking up early, and not being able to getting enough refreshing sleep.

We need good quality, restful sleep to feel our best and maintain health: to renew and restore physically as well as psychologically. It's quite normal to have an occasional night or two of sleeplessness, but when insomnia is chronic it can lead to a variety of debilitating symptoms including: irritability, moodiness, depression, anxiety, daytime drowsiness, occupational mistakes and accidents, automobile accidents, weight gain, a compromised immune system, high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke. Simply said, not sleeping well diminishes the quality and enjoyment of life.

So what causes insomnia? Chronic insomnia is directly influenced by certain medications, recreational drugs including caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol, medical problems, sleep disorders such as sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, narcolepsy, and heavy snoring, poor diet/nutrition, stress from daily living/lifestyle factors, jet lag, psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety disorder or other mental illness, and environmental factors.

If you have trouble getting a good night sleep here a few proven tips to make sure the sandman pays you a visit:

Go to sleep and wake up at the same time everyday (even on weekends). This will help reset your sleep-wake cycle. The best times for most people to go to sleep are 10:00 to 11:00 pm and the best times to awaken are between 6:00 and 7:00pm. Avoid napping if you have trouble sleeping.

Exercise. Even a short 20 minute walk will work. This will help reduce your stress hormones, clear your mind and make you more tired at bedtime. Be careful not to exercise vigorously too close to bedtime though as it may have just the opposite effect and make you feel more energized.

Turn off electronics. The light coming from your television is very stimulating to the visual cortex of your brain - last thing you need late at night. Experiment with turning off your television by 9:00 pm. This goes for surfing the Internet too! Try it for a week or two and see what happens.

Turn down the lights. Your body and mind take signals from the environment. Melatonin is a hormone that informs your system that is time to sleep and is triggered by darkness. Being in a well-lighted environment throughout the night is counter-productive to relaxing and falling asleep. Try lighting some candles.

Listen to soft music. Researchers in Japan have found the listening to soft, relaxing music is a highly effective way to fall asleep.

Herbs and tea. Chamomile tea is time proven remedy for relaxing. Other herbs that work well include hops, passionflower, and valerian. These herbs are readily available as capsules or tinctures.

Caffeine. Caffeine can remain in your system for up to 35 hours. That means that cup of coffee you had this morning can keep you awake tonight. Wean yourself off of caffeine with decaf or try herb teas. Watch out for caffeine in soda too!

Alcohol. Many people have a drink or two to fall asleep. While it's true the alcohol will help you fall asleep, you'll most likely awaken as it interferes with deeper stages of sleep and can be dehydrating.

Is there noise coming from inside or outside of your home? We need a quiet environment to sleep well. If there is noise around your bedroom consider making some adjustments: earplugs, a white noise generator, moving your bedroom, etc.

Overactive mind. If your mind won't shut off, get out a pen and paper and write down everything going through your mind until it is cleared. Remind yourself that you can deal with these things tomorrow.

Make relaxation your goal, not sleep. Many people beat themselves up if they can't fall asleep, only making the situation worse. Remember that nobody has died as a result of not sleeping and that relaxation is the key to falling asleep. If you can relax sleep will follow naturally. Make relaxation your goal!

Additional Resources:
www.sleepfoundation.org
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/sleep/insomnia.htm

Howard VanEs, M.A. is a local wellness writer, author, yoga teacher and former psychotherapist. Howard offers a free monthly health and wellness newsletter which can be obtained by visiting www.letsdoयोग.com. Reach Howard directly at info@letsdoयोग.com



Individual Introductory Session
\$5 with this ad (\$29 value)
 This session checks your:

- Flexibility
- Balance
- Breathing
- Organ Function
- Energy Flow
- Stress Levels

Experience and understand our healing and relaxing meditation programs.
 Receive a prescription for an ideal training program based on your personal condition and goal.

Please call to Arrange an Appointment
 452 Center Street, Moraga
 next to t j maxx Rheem Valley Shopping Ct.

452 Center Street, Moraga
 925.377.YOGA
 DahnWorld HOLISTIC FITNESS


Advertising on the business page:

The Lamorinda Weekly offers a great opportunity for local businesses to advertise products or services related to the weekly feature. We invite you to send us a brief introduction to your business so that we can inform you when a complementary topic is scheduled. Email your information to info@lamorindaweekly.com, fax to 800-690-8136, or mail to Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94556.

Discover Your Personal Path To Fitness
with Living Lean

Live Lean

- ✓ Lose One Pound Per Week
- ✓ Customized Nutrition & Exercise Program
- ✓ Weekly Personal Training
- ✓ Health Assessment



The Program Includes:

- Body Fat Testing
- Body Composition Analysis
- Customized Menu Plan
- Personal Weight Training
- Personal Cardio Training

and now ...
Introducing Private Yoga Sessions

Call Sheena at 925-360-7051
 AFAA Certified Personal Trainer and Weight Loss Expert.
 Space is Limited !

Lafayette Health Club

Want Results?

Our Pilates program is "Indoor Conditioning for your Outdoor Lifestyle"



Mon-Th: 5am-9:30pm
 Fri: 5am-8:30pm
 Sat/Sun: 7am-7pm

Strengthen and Stretch !!
 Pilates is for EVERYBODY!

85 Lafayette Circle • Lafayette • 284-7732
 Down from Chow Restaurant
www.lafayettehealthclub.com