

Media Release



EMBARGO: 4 June 2009

‘REDUCE SATURATED FAT’ URGES HEART FOUNDATION AFTER MAJOR REVIEW

An extensive Heart Foundation review into the fat we eat has found more evidence about the harmful nature of trans fat and the negative effects of too much saturated fat.

The review has prompted the Heart Foundation to urge Australians to switch their fat focus from ‘total fat’ to ‘type of fat’ with a strong recommendation to cut back on saturated fat which remains a key issue for cardiovascular risk.

The *dietary fats and dietary cholesterol for cardiovascular health* review considered all of the latest evidence around the cardiovascular health and ‘types of fat’ – the benefits of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats and the negative health impacts of saturated and trans fats.

Ms Susan Anderson, National Healthy Weight Director for the Heart Foundation said Australians are eating twice the Heart Foundation’s recommended maximum of saturated fat.ⁱ

“This is alarming because evidence continues to show that saturated fat leads to increased levels of LDL or ‘bad cholesterol’ in the blood which is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease,” she added. “The good news is that reducing saturated fat in your meals will help to lower your LDL cholesterol, much more than avoiding cholesterol in foods.”

The easiest way to reduce saturated fat is to choose reduced fat dairy foods, limit foods such as pastries, pies, pizza, biscuits and hot chips to once a week and trim all meat and poultry of visible fat before cooking.**

“At a time when so many Australians are at risk of developing or living with chronic disease, it’s more important than ever for people to understand that the ‘type of fat’ is key to maintaining good health; not ‘fat’ generally,” she added.

“Fats are an important part of a healthy balanced diet and we should not exclude them. We just have to choose the healthier unsaturated fats instead of saturated and trans fats,” said Ms Anderson.

Using a variety of polyunsaturated or monounsaturated oils (eg. canola, sunflower, soybean, olive, sesame and peanut oil) and eating unsalted nuts, avocados and fish will help to provide ‘good’ fats.

Reducing the amount of saturated fat we consume can be achieved quickly by just making five simple changes that will make a big difference to you and your family's health now and in the long-term. In fact, making the first two swaps alone could remove almost 7kg of saturated fat from your diet each year.

Heart Foundation tips to reduce your family's saturated fat today:

1. **Swap full fat dairy foods for reduced, low or no fat dairy foods** – for all family members over two years old. You'll **save 4kg of saturated fat a year** if you do this with 1 cup of milk, 2 slices of cheese and a small tub of yoghurt a day. The savings will be even greater if you choose no fat options!
2. **Swap butter** for a margarine spread – just by doing this with your daily toast will **save 2.85kg of saturated fat** from your diet in one year.
3. **Cut the fat** - trim all visible fat from meat; remove skin from chicken and try to avoid processed meats (e.g. ham, unless it has the Heart Foundation Tick).
4. **Eat 2-3 serves of oily fish a week** - 150g is a serve which is about the size of your hand. Add fish oil capsules and omega-3 enriched foods and drinks if you're not eating salmon or sardines often enough.
5. **Choose healthier treats** – cakes, pastries and biscuits are one of the main sources of saturated fat in our diets. Raisin bread, Tick approved cereal / nut bars or Tick approved sweet biscuits are healthier options.

To learn more about healthier eating call the Heart Foundation Health Information Service on 1300 36 27 87 or visit www.heartfoundation.org.au

- ends -

For more information or interviews, please contact: Nicole Osborne, PR Manager on 0432 754 907 or Kat Tate on (02) 9219 2426.

ⁱ The Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey found children are consuming twice the recommended maximum allowance of saturated fat. As parents tend to eat the same foods as their children, we have assumed that the adult intake of saturated fat is the same.

** Drawn from The Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey and BIS Shrapnel; Foodservice in Australia 2009.