

The Important Role of Fats in the Diet

From: *The Essential Thyroid Cookbook*, Appendix C

Saturated fats and cholesterol have been vilified for decades, but they're essential for good health and a necessary component of every cell in your body.

Fat and cholesterol help to regulate insulin levels, convert food into energy, protect liver function, and monitor the body's innate cholesterol production, which is generated by the liver and makes up about 75 percent (depending on heredity) of the cholesterol our bodies need.

Cholesterol is not the major culprit in heart disease. And saturated fat does not raise cholesterol levels. These theories have been proven repeatedly, but mainstream medicine continues to heavily promote low-fat diets and the multi-billion dollar statin drug industry.

"The diet-heart hypothesis—which holds that eating cholesterol and saturated fat raises cholesterol in our blood—originated with studies in both animals and humans more than half a century ago. However, more recent (and higher quality) evidence doesn't support it," states Chris Kresser, a globally recognized leader in the field functional and integrative medicine.¹

Dr. Frank Lipman states, "For years, mainstream medical organizations such as the American Heart Association have demonized saturated fat as a root cause of cardiovascular disease. And, for years, progressive docs—backed by meta-analyses and other studies—have shouted from the rooftops that it's refined carbs and processed sugars—NOT saturated fat—that drive heart disease (and so many other chronic diseases). Now, comes big news that the sugar industry bribed scientists in the 1960s to downplay the relationship between sugar and heart disease and point the finger at saturated fat instead."²

In Dr. Lipman's interview with Dr. Mark Pettus, Pettus stated, "We spent most of the last generation looking at total cholesterol and LDL as if to suggest that those two values give you an accurate reflection of what we know to be a much more complex and nuanced issue with lipids. But, when you give people fat from a quality source and lower their carbohydrates, generally you see their triglycerides come down. That's a good thing. You see their good cholesterol, the HDL, go up. That's a really good thing."³

According to OB/GYN nurse practitioner and women’s health expert, Marcelle Pick, “Cholesterol is the mother of all fat molecules in our bodies. We literally run on the stuff. It maintains neurotransmitter and brain function, builds brain and nerve tissue, and nourishes the immune system. It provides the insulation around nerves that transmit electrical impulses. It is a keystone of normal cell function and mood regulation and helps us digest fat-soluble vitamins like A, D, E, and K. Importantly for women, many of our most important hormones, including estrogen and progesterone, are made from cholesterol.”⁴

It’s not necessary to understand each of the hormones in the chart below—the important take-away is that they’re all made from cholesterol, which has been villainized. No wonder we see so many hormonal imbalances in women who shy away from dietary fat. In my mind, the criminalization of dietary fat has been a train wreck for many women and their hormonal health.

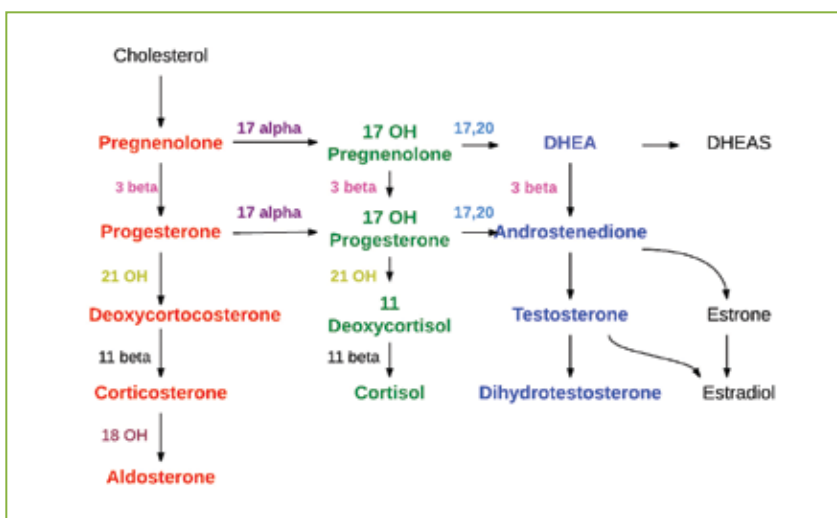


Chart by: Endocrine doctor (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0
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Additionally, we need fat to burn fat. Fat is what helps us feel full and satiated and without it, there’s no real feeling of satisfaction, which makes us eat more than necessary. It also helps to balance blood sugar by slowing the release of carbohydrates into our system and levels the ratio of two hormones, insulin to glucagon, which is critical for giving stored fat the heave-ho. The short story is that the right kinds of healthful fats help to make us hotter metabolic burners.

The myth-busting that’s taken place the last several years about fat and cholesterol has been head-spinning; we’ve learned that a diet in the right types of healthful fats doesn’t cause heart disease and doesn’t make us fat. If you’d like to learn more, I suggest:

- Chris Kresser’s report, *The Diet-Heart Myth*, found here: www.chriskresser.com/ebook/the-diet-heart-myth
- Dr. Mark Hyman’s book, *Eat Fat, Get Thin* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2016).