

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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## "Fish Oils are Sounding Fishy"

For decades, we have been scolded and warned to avoid eating saturated fats because of their presumed link to heart disease. But, not so fast. Until now, doctors have said that saturated fats increase "bad" LDL cholesterol, which can cause plaques to form in your arteries and raise your risk of a heart attack or stroke. At the same time, omega-3 fish oils were said to improve heart health because they allegedly increase "good" HDL cholesterol. Good cholesterol is believed to help the body rid itself of bad cholesterol. Saturated fats are solid at room temperature. They can be found in butter, lard, cheese and cream, as well as the fatty white areas on cuts of meat. By contrast, unsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature, such as those seen in vegetable cooking oil or olive oil. Amazingly, Dr. Rajiv Chowdhury, a cardiovascular epidemiologist at the University of Cambridge and lead author of a comprehensive review of nutrition research related to fats, and his team found that neither effect seemed to make much difference for overall cardiac risk. In short, fish oil supplements do not protect your heart. Their meta-analysis study involved data from 72 studies with more than 600,000 participants from 18 nations. The team combined study findings to assess the heart health benefits of all types of dietary fat, including saturated fat, unsaturated fat, and the omega-3 (fish oils) and omega-6 fatty acids. Saturated fats, long considered a dietary no-no, appeared to pose no additional risk for heart disease according to recent research. Shockingly, saturated fats carried about the same cardiac risk as unsaturated fats, omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. Thus, people who take fish oil capsules may not be getting the heart-health benefits they desired, according to a pair of new research reports. Sadly, both studies found the omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil supplements do not provide any significant protection against heart disease, when compared to other types of dietary fats. Researchers looked at the 17 randomized clinical trials and found they showed consistently little or no significant effect on reducing coronary heart disease events." A second study also came to the same disappointing conclusion regarding omega-3 fatty acid fish oils. This study had been reviewing the use of omega-3s for eye health, but researchers used their data to look at whether the supplements also helped prevent heart disease. Bad trans fats can still be found in processed foods, which are "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated" in the ingredient list.

In the America that I love, people should get their omega-3 fatty acids and fish oil from food rather than through supplements. All supplements should be used with caution. Please eat a balanced diet and exercise regularly.

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