

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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“Some Foods Not As Bad As Claimed”

We are constantly warned about eating harmful foods. However, many may not be as harmful as claimed. Some foods are best eaten in moderation rather than eliminated entirely from the diet. **Fried Foods.** In North America, 25-36% of adults consume foods, usually fried, from fast food restaurants every day. Moderation and variety with any food is the key to healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. Total fried food consumption of at least one serving per day was associated with a modestly higher but not significant risk of cardiovascular mortality. Over-consumption gets you into trouble so enjoy fried foods in moderation. **Meat.** The newly revised *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025*, recommend that we limit our intake of red and processed meats, stating they are “in and of themselves, associated with detrimental health outcomes.” What remains up for debate is the *amount* of red meat consumption that is considered safe. Some evidence suggests that moderate amounts of meat may offer health benefits. For 12 centuries, the consumption of meat was largely banned in Japan, for religious and health reasons. This changed in the period following World War II when intake of animal products began to increase. According to an article published in *Nature* in 2020, one of the reasons for Japan’s high rates of cerebrovascular mortality was that people were not getting enough cholesterol, which is an important part of building strong blood vessel walls. This in turn increased the risk of blood vessel rupture and, therefore, the risk of intracerebral hemorrhage. When Japan’s population began consuming more animal products, the additional saturated fatty acids, along with increased intake of calcium, strengthened blood vessel walls and led to lower blood pressure. **Eggs.** People tend to eat eggs along with other foods like bacon, sausage, or ham, which can tip a meal toward extremely high levels of saturated fats. How you cook your eggs matters too: If you’re frying them in oil or butter, this may play a bigger role in contributing to heart disease than the eggs themselves. Researchers found that those with a higher egg intake tended to have a higher body mass index and consumed more red meats. However, after adjusting for other lifestyle and dietary factors, the researchers concluded that eating at least one egg per day was not associated with incident cardiovascular disease. The results were similar for coronary heart disease and stroke. Additionally, the researchers found that among Asian populations, egg consumption was associated with lower risks of cardiovascular disease.

In the America that I love, restraint rather than elimination, may be best for health when it comes to many common foods and beverages. So, less can be better. Still, use good common sense and choose foods wisely.

Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

Surgeon ~ Scientist ~ Patient Advocate

27439 Highway 441, Kentwood, LA 70444

985-229-6955 Home | 985-229-3760 – Fax | 985-514-0578 – Cell

rhowesmd@hughes.net | www.iwillfindthecure.org

