

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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

July 14, 2019

“Fried Food Dilemma”

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. But could eating fried foods actually shorten our lives? The connection between eating fried foods and obesity and heart disease is well known. In a 2018 study, it was shown that frequent consumption of fried foods, especially fried chicken and fried fish/shellfish, was associated with a higher risk of all cause and cardiovascular mortality in women in the US. Several cohort studies in US populations showed that higher consumption of fried foods was associated with an increased risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, which are among the leading causes of death. However, a study in a Mediterranean population found no association between fried food consumption and coronary heart disease. A 2019 study has shown that frequent consumption of fried foods, particularly fried chicken and fried fish/shellfish, was correlated with a higher risk of all cause and cardiovascular mortality in this study population. Total or individual consumption of fried food was not generally linked to cancer mortality. Total fried food consumption of at least one serving per day was associated with a modestly higher but not significant risk of cardiovascular mortality. Frying is a complex cooking process that modifies the composition of foods and the frying medium. During frying, foods can lose water and absorb fat, and the frying oils deteriorate, especially when reused. Moreover, frying makes food crunchy and more appetizing, which can lead to excess intake. Another worry with fried food centers on acrylamide, a chemical that forms in foods cooked at high temperatures, such as fried and baked foods. Acrylamide has been shown in animal studies to cause cancer. When food is cooked at very high heat, an amino acid -- asparagine -- in the food reacts with sugars to produce acrylamide. This chemical can form in many fried foods, but it's especially common in potatoes. The darker you fry the food, the more acrylamide it contains. Liquid oils are the healthiest options, because they contain high amounts of the 'healthy fats' -- polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. Olive, soybean, and canola oils are all good choices. These oils are also high in heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Never reuse oil when you fry. Start with a fresh batch each time. And when you're done frying, use paper towels to soak any excess oil off the food.

In the America that I love, we realize that you don't have to give up fried food, but you also don't want to overdo it. It is over consumption that gets you into trouble. Enjoying fried foods in moderation.

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

