



RECENT SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS DECADE OF RESEARCH INTO HEALTH BENEFITS OF MILK FAT

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Brussels, 26 February 2009 - Newly published scientific reviews note that over the last decade, emerging research indicates that 'milk-derived fat may offer significant health benefits compared to some common sources of dietary fats.' The reviews, published as a supplement to a recent issue of the Journal of the American College of Nutrition, were the result of a symposium called 'Scientific Update on Dairy Fats and Cardiovascular Disease*'.

Review authors stressed that the important contributions of dairy products 'in meeting human dietary requirements for energy, high quality protein and several key minerals and vitamins are well documented, although the nutritional importance of dairy fats is often less well understood.' The symposium provided an opportunity to reappraise the impact of dairy foods and milk fat on cardiovascular diseases (CVD) and to place dairy fat into the context of overall human health.

The authors also added that 'The information presented at this symposium and reviewed in this supplement highlight that despite the contribution of dairy products to the saturated fatty acid composition of the diet, there is no clear evidence that dairy food consumption is consistently associated with a higher risk of CVD. Given the diversity of available dairy foods of widely differing composition and their contribution to nutrient intake within the population, recommendations to reduce dairy food consumption irrespective of the nature of the dairy product should be made with caution.'

For over half a century, the concept of healthy eating has become synonymous with avoiding dietary fat and cholesterol, especially saturated fat. On a population basis, a diet low in saturated fat remains at the heart of nutritional advice in many countries for lowering plasma cholesterol and reducing CVD risk. In the case of dairy products, authors noted, there has been a general perception that a food containing saturated fat is unlikely to be beneficial to health. However, they said, 'placing milk fat and dairy products within the context of overall health is a key consideration.'

Might dietary guidelines about dairy and dairy fats in the diet be a step behind the science?

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Note to editors:

* Over 50 internationally recognized experts in dietary fats and human health reviewed the available scientific evidence relating dairy products and milk fat to CVD risk at a Symposium on 'Scientific Update on Dairy Fats and Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)' hosted by the University of Reading (UK) and organised and facilitated by the International Dairy Federation.

The proceedings of this symposium confirming the important role of dairy for human health have been published as a supplement to the December issue of the Journal of the American College of Nutrition (JACN, Vol 27, No. 6, 720S-754S, 2008).