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## Milk fats Good for you or not?

Research finds milk's natural trans fats help reduce cardiovascular disease risk factors.


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## MILK FATS

Good for you or not? Research finds milk's natural trans fats help reduce cardiovascular disease risk factors.

For years a common message heard was that milk fats, namely butter and cheese, were bad for your heart and increased your risk for cardiovascular disease. Consumers listened and the amount of animal fat in the North American diet declined significantly. Interestingly, the expected health benefits did not materialize, which led UAlberta researchers to wonder if milk fats were really that bad.

### Long-term research finds new health benefits

In the 1980s, a UAlberta research team was part of a worldwide major scientific movement to learn the truth about milk fats. One fat that attracted a lot of attention was conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), an unsaturated trans fatty acid naturally present in dairy. Unlike harmful artificially produced partially hydrogenated trans fats, natural CLA promoted health and included potent anti-cancer properties. When additional studies suggested the picture was bigger than just CLA, the research scope was expanded to include other natural trans fats like vaccenic acid, the single most abundant trans fat in milk.

The new research conducted at UAlberta indicated that vaccenic acid and other natural trans fats were a boon to human health. Tests showed that feeding natural trans fat was associated with a major lowering of triglyceride levels and a modest lowering of both total and LDL (low density lipoprotein or) cholesterol levels—all key risk factors for cardiovascular disease and other health problems.

[Read the full story](#)