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Liz Copeland's newsletter
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Look After your Heart!



Did you know that 50% of people who have heart attacks **don't** have high cholesterol? This means that, to prevent or treat heart disease, we need to look beyond cholesterol. Here are some pointers to consider and some dietary advice to help you to a healthy heart.

Trans fats

Trans fats are among the most damaging substances for our arteries. They come from the processing of vegetable oils that are used as fats in baked goods. Typically you will find them in cakes, biscuits, muffins, danish pastries, pies, sausage rolls and other store-bought baked goods. They are also found in fast takeaway food such as burgers, chicken nuggets and fish fingers.

Trans fats are very, very nasty. They create inflammation in blood vessel walls. This means that artery walls are more easily damaged, are more likely to fur up with cholesterol and blood clots are more likely to form. According to the New England Journal of Medicine⁽¹⁾ they:

- Change the way the liver processes fats
- May affect our sensitivity to insulin
- Tell the immune system to produce more inflammatory chemicals. This will increase blood clotting.

The inflammatory changes lead to inflamed and clogged arteries. Inflammation also increases blood clotting. The combination of narrowed arteries and increased blood clots is a very good way of heading towards a heart attack or stroke.

What can you do?

- Avoid baked goods and fast foods as much as possible.
- If you buy ready-meals look at the labels to see if trans fats are listed. Almost all fat products made from vegetable oil will contain trans fats though they may not be labelled as such.
- If you bake goods at home, use butter. It does contain trans fats but natural dairy-based trans fats appear to be far less harmful than the synthetic trans fats that come from processed vegetable oils.
- Get some exercise
- Don't smoke
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Avoid sugar rich and starch-rich foods
- Eat more whole grains

How can we help?

Tranzformations can organise dietary advice with or without a full cardiovascular profile, which will measure blood lipids, homocysteine, inflammatory markers and relevant nutritional markers. The results will be discussed with you and you will be able to take away a customised diet plan, so that you can start your healthy heart programme straightaway.

References: (1) Mozaffarian D et al., Trans fatty acids and cardiovascular disease. New England Journal of Medicine 2006;354:1601-13