

## Saturated Fats, CVD Link Challenged

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ROSEMONT, Ill.—Long-held beliefs about the impact of saturated fatty acids on the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) are being challenged by a new perspectives paper published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

The findings were presented last May at an international symposium in Copenhagen where experts concluded that "single risk factors have limitations when considered on their own because the effects of diet on CVD risk are mediated by many pathways, with blood lipids being only one." They also said the ratio of total cholesterol to HDL cholesterol is a better predictor of the effect of saturated fatty acids on CVD risk than LDL- and/or total cholesterol because individual fatty acids have differential effects on various blood lipids.

The entire components comprised within the food matrix may be more important than concentrating solely on fatty acids content when determining the correlation between CVD and food. The authors noted protein, calcium and other nutrients within cheese, including certain fatty acids, may offset the effects of its saturated fatty acids content on blood lipids and overall CVD risk. Current evidence only suggests that substitution of saturated fatty acids by polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs), but not carbohydrates, results in a lowering of total and LDL cholesterol.

"However, even this conclusion isn't the last word, as there is growing recognition that individual fatty acids within the PUFA category have different physiologic effects," said Dr. Cindy Schweitzer, Technical Director, Global Dairy Platform, referring to a recent analysis published in *the British Journal of Nutrition* which reported that substitution of certain PUFA for saturated fatty acids and trans fatty acids increased risk of coronary heart disease.

Similarly, the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans state "moderate evidence shows that intake of milk and milk products is linked to improved bone health, especially in children and adolescents. Moderate evidence also indicates that intake of milk and milk products is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes and with lower blood pressure in adults."