

## **How Has Saturated Fat Become So Controversial?**

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Research over the last decades has provided insightful but sometime discordant information as to the role of dairy foods in health. Because high-fat dairy products contribute significantly to dietary fat and SFA intake, and because SFA are so strongly believed to be involved in the etiology of CVD, many guidelines advocate consumption of low-fat dairy products as opposed to products with higher fat content. Yet, the association between SFA and the risk of CVD remains highly controversial. Several meta-analyses of population studies have in fact failed to find an association between dietary SFA intake and the risk of CVD. Our recent systematic review of evidence from epidemiological studies indicate that intake of total dairy, low-fat dairy, cheese and fermented dairy is associated with a reduced risk of stroke. Consumption of total dairy, low-fat dairy and milk specifically may be associated with a lower risk of hypertension. Interpretation of the association between dietary SFA from various dairy foods and health relies on indirect evidence from epidemiological data as well as from a thorough understanding of their impact on many cardiometabolic risk factors, not just LDL-C and blood pressure. In that regard, the focus on SFA as a single nutrient may simply be obsolete. Whole foods in the context of whole diets need to be considered in the diet-heart paradigm.