


Ask Leyla: Low-fat diets and heart disease

Q: My mother has had undiagnosed pre-diabetes for years and now has established coronary artery disease (CAD). Her cardiologist has her convinced that embarking on a super low-fat diet will help to decrease her LDL cholesterol.

Hoping you and Dr. Hoffman can explain why a low-fat diet would be potentially detrimental for my mother or anyone for that matter? Although I'm an RD, I think it is hard for family members to always take my advice. 

A: I hear you! Your message merits repetition because it can't be emphasized enough. This is the only way we can un-brainwash the masses who are beholden to their doctor's advice to follow the cardiac "prudent" diet. You and I know there's nothing prudent about it! It is my opinion that doctors not properly schooled and certified in nutrition are not qualified to give diet advice. To all doctors reading this, please refer your patients to a qualified RD or other certified nutritionist professional. Your patients will have better compliance and improved health.

Fact: Those with diabetes and even pre-diabetes progress to CAD as much as 70 percent faster than individuals without diabetes. High blood sugar and insulin levels create inflammation, especially in arteries. A high-carb, low-fat diet causes LDL particles to become small, dense and more atherogenic. This is much more indicative of health outcomes than the amount of LDL circulating. We want big, fluffy, "pattern A" particles, not "pattern B."

Pre-diabetes, like diabetes, is defined as a condition of carbohydrate intolerance. On a low-fat diet, there's nothing else to eat except some protein and a lot of carbs. Even whole grains and other 'complex carbs' will still exacerbate the condition.

It is long known that most of our chronic diseases can be eradicated with changes in diet and lifestyle, especially our epidemics of diabetes and heart disease.

A high-fat, low-carb diet is the antidote. Healthy fats, like those found in grass-fed meats, free-range poultry, safe and sustainable seafood, avocado, nuts, seeds and oils such as olive and coconut do not cause unfavorable spikes in blood sugar and insulin levels. Carbohydrates do.

To your health!