


**Family Living Focus**  
 Beaver Co. Extension Agent  
**Mary Alice Gettings**



**Food for a Happy Heart**

The bad news — heart disease continues to be our number one killer.

The good news — we can do something about it.

By changing a few bad habits, we'll be on our way to a long and healthy life.

Usually, it's much easier said than done. For that reason, we have to take it one day at a time, and make small changes over time.

In addition to stopping smoking and beginning an exercise program, your eating plan plays a major part in reducing your risk of heart disease. One day we hear "eat oat bran." The next day, we're told to "go back to butter." Should we take fish oil or garlic pills? What's a person to believe?

**What are HDLs and LDLs?**

What we do know for sure is that eating a diet low in saturated fat can help to reduce your risk of heart disease. It all has to do with HDLs and LDLs. Simply stated, HDLs and LDLs are lipoproteins in your body that carry cholesterol, a fat-like waxy substance that comes from animal products.

While HDLs are often

referred to as "good" cholesterol carriers, LDLs are called the "bad" cholesterol carriers. An easy way to remember the good from the bad is that HDLs are healthy carriers, while LDLs are lousy carriers.

Think of HDLs as garbage trucks. They pick up the cholesterol (garbage) in the bloodstream and take it to the liver, which gets rid of it. LDLs are like delivery trucks. They pick up the cholesterol in the bloodstream and deliver it to your heart.

**How does diet affect HDLs and LDLs?** The three types of fat in your diet can affect HDLs and LDLs. Saturated fats, which come from animal products, are solid at room temperature. Foods containing saturated fat are butter, hydrogenated (solid) fats and shortenings, lard, bacon, chicken skin, fat in red meat, and palm and coconut oils. Saturated fats increase the LDL level in your bloodstream.

Liquid oils are called polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. Polyunsaturated fats include corn, safflower, sunflower and cottonseed oils. Olive, peanut and canola oils are monounsaturated fats. While

polunsaturated fats are O.K., monounsaturated fats are far better. The reason for this is that both of these oils can decrease LDLs, which protect us against heart disease. The problem with polyunsaturated fats is that they will also slightly decrease the HDLs. That's not good because HDLs protect us. Since monounsaturated fats don't decrease HDLs, they are the preferred fat.

Can I take a supplement to reduce my risk of heart disease?

Fish oil, garlic, and Vitamin E have all be linked to decreasing one's risk of heart disease. Fish oil has been found to decrease triglycerides (TG), but not cholesterol. While we know that very high TG levels can result in pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas), we're not exactly sure of what the relationship is between TG and heart disease. Current research suspects that a high TG, along with a high cholesterol, may increase your risk of heart disease.

Although garlic has been linked with reducing cancer as well as heart disease risk, more research is necessary. While the use of garlic in the prevention of these chronic diseases looks promising, we're not sure of the amount and the form one needs to take to see the benefits. This will be an area of great interest in the future.

The antioxidant Vitamin E looks like it may be beneficial in reducing heart disease risk.

When LDLs are attached to oxygen, the cholesterol they deposit easily sticks to the arteries. If there is no oxygen attached to the LDL, the cholesterol doesn't seem to stick to the arteries as much. This is where Vitamin E comes into play as an antioxidant. It may prevent oxygen from attaching to the LDLs. How much Vitamin E should you take? Studies have not confirmed an exact amount, but up to 800 I.U. per day has been shown to be safe. If you choose to take a Vitamin E supplement, tell your doctor.

Will oatmeal prevent heart disease? The Food and Drug Administration approved the use of a health claim to be placed on labels of oat bran, oatmeal and whole oat flour. This claim states that "these foods, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease."

The catch here is that you have to eat four servings of oatmeal a day to see a benefit. And it's not magic. Eating eggs and bacon with a bowl of oat bran does not do the trick. It's necessary for you to consistently eat the correct number of servings per day almost every day to see long-lasting results. As soon as you stop eating oat products,

your cholesterol levels will return to pre-oat days.

**Which is better: butter or margarine?** For those of you who are butter lovers, the reports of several years ago that butter is better for your heart than margarine, brought a smile to your face.

Margarine's culprit: trans fatty acids. Researchers reported that these fatty acids can actually increase your risk of heart disease more than saturated fats. Butter lovers rejoiced and returned to their first love, only to hear more controversy.

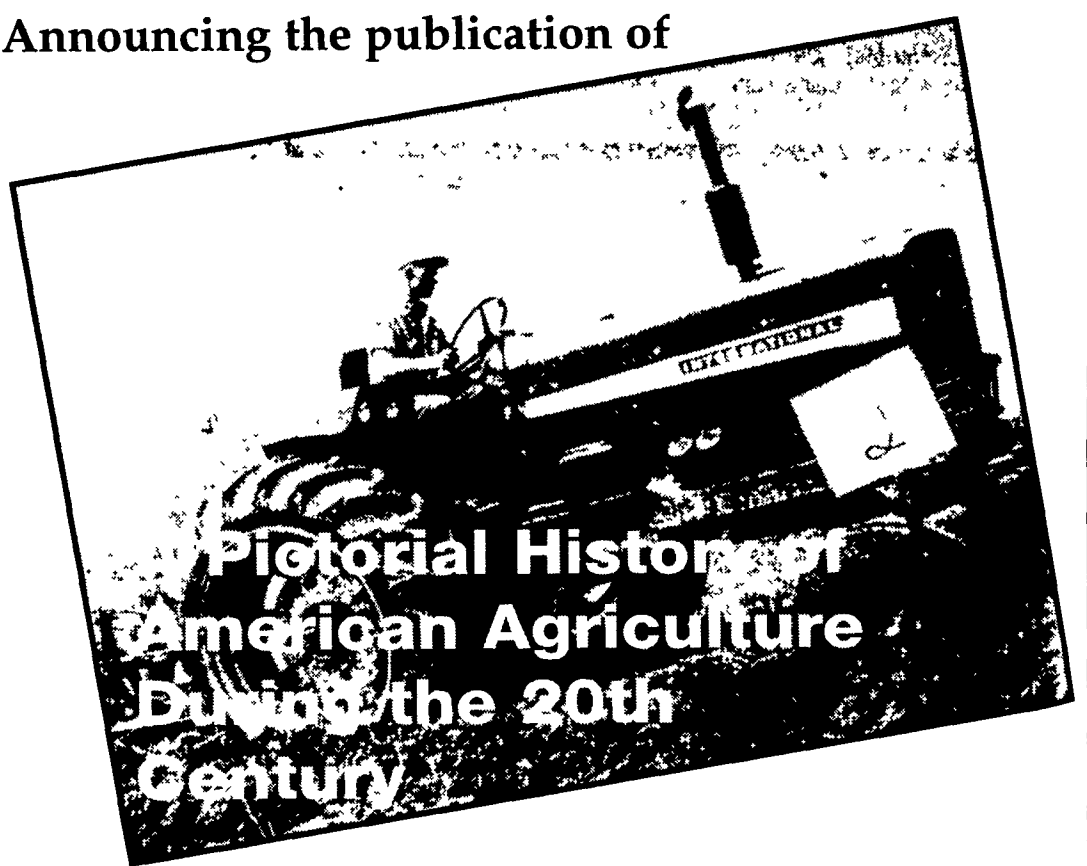
The verdict is, eat whatever you like best, but in small amounts. If you intend to continue to eat a high-fat diet, margarine is the better choice. Health professionals would prefer you to eat a small amount of your favorite topping and decrease your total fat intake.

Hopefully, this has cleared up some of the confusion you've felt over the past several years. Remember, change takes time. You didn't learn your habits overnight, so you can't expect to change them that quick.

Take one step at a time. Work on changing one food-related and one activity-related behavior over several weeks and you'll soon have a very happy, healthy heart.

**MILK AMERICA'S HEALTH KICK**

**Announcing the publication of**



**Pictorial History of American Agriculture During the 20th Century**

Recalling our agricultural heritage, a new book entitle *A Century of Farming* (a pictorial review), will be published by *Lancaster Farming* in time for Christmas giving and the millennium. This work will feature several hundred photographs that show life on the farm from 1901 through the 1990's *Lancaster Farming* is commencing work on this pictorial history right now, but we need your help.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP...**

If you have photographs of bygone days that show old agriculture enterprises and events during this century, would you please share them with us and our readers? Prospective entries would include photos from family albums that show activities such as hay making, milking, range shelters for poultry, harvesting, planting, types of livestock, fair or farm show activities, and farm organizations and extension, 4-H, FFA, ect

In summary, *Lancaster Farming* is looking for photographs of people, places and things that depict the history of agriculture during this century.

-The photographs should be identifiable, including the names of at least some of the individuals in the photo, and the time, place and background of the photo. To help insure a speedy return of your photographs, please include a self-addressed envelope large enough to accept your photographs. They are sent at your own risk.

-*Lancaster Farming* will print a credit line with each photo to identify the person or organization who shared it with us.  
 -You may bring your photos to our *Lancaster Farming* office, 1 East Main St., Ephrata, PA or send them to:

**Lancaster Farming  
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*Lancaster Farming* will make every effort to return photographs to their owners as soon as possible after we received them. Space may prohibit us from printing every photo submitted

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