

BODY FAQ

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What is my body made of?

Your body is made from the foods you eat. It is made of the fats, proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, water, and other chemical substances you obtain from your diet.

This means that if you eat a balanced diet of healthy foods, your body will receive all the substances it needs to stay healthy and fight off disease. However, if you eat an unbalanced diet full of harmful substances, your body will quickly become sick.

If you miss key nutrients, your body will not have the building blocks it needs to repair and maintain itself. If you eat too many nutrients, your body must destroy and get rid of the excessive nutrients. By doing so, it may not be able to destroy cancer cells or viruses attacking your body.

Where does fat come from?

We get fats in our bodies not only from the fat in the food we eat, but also from the conversion of excess calories (from protein and carbohydrates) into stored fat. Proteins and carbohydrates that we eat beyond what our bodies need are converted to saturated or monounsaturated fats.

If you eat foods high in saturated fat, or too many calories which your body converts to saturated fat, most of the fat in your body will be saturated (solid) fat. This means that your arteries will be hard and that you will develop high blood pressure. On the other hand, if you eat foods high in EFAs, your body will contain a lot of essential (fluid) fat. This means that your arteries can remain soft and that your blood will be less likely to form clots (which obstruct arteries and cause strokes or heart attacks).

How will eating EFs make my body work better?

Each cell in your body is encapsulated by a "cell membrane." The membrane allows certain materials to pass in and out of the cell, and it lets the cell communicate with its neighbors. The cell membrane must have a precise amount of "fluidity." Too hard, and the membrane cannot move things in and out. Too soft, and it becomes "mushy" and lets things leak in and out.

Optimal fluidity means that the cell membrane can rapidly change from a harder to a softer state and vice-versa (a process called "phase transition"). The membrane can appear transparent to desirable substances, and insurmountable to dangerous ones. Proper fluidity allows the cell to change shape and move its "tentacles" (receptors) to properly communicate with other cells or attack foreign invaders.

If your body does not have the right types of fats, your cells cannot make good cell membranes. If you eat too many hard saturated fats, your membranes will be hard and brittle. When your body needs to allow substances in or out of cells, or to prevent toxins from entering cells, phase transitions will occur too slowly or not at all. Your vessels will be hard. Your blood will become mushy (sticky), and move slowly. Of course, the body never allows cells to become hard as a rock (you will be dead long before). Instead, the body makes more cholesterol and MUFAs and incorporates them in to cell membranes to make them

more fluid. Cholesterol and MUFAs keep cells softer but are not as adaptable as PUFAs (phase transitions are not sharp; cells adapt sluggishly to changing conditions).

If your membranes are suboptimal, you will develop high blood pressure, because the heart has to pump harder to get blood through hardened vessels. It is like having an old hose or a clogged piping system: you need more water pressure to get enough water. When the blood circulates poorly, you do not get enough oxygen to your brain, your heart, or your kidneys. Your body will not work as well as it could.

If you eat EFs, you are providing each cell with the material it needs to build fluid cell membranes. Then your cells can function optimally. Your vessels are soft. Your blood circulates much better. Your organs get enough oxygen and nutrients. Your body can function more optimally.

Why should I change my eating habits? I feel fine!

Unfortunately, cardiovascular disease does not usually hurt immediately after a meal. Because it does not hurt, people do not associate diet with disease (that is why heart disease is called the "silent killer"). By the time people get their first heart attack, it may already be too late.

However, by changing our eating habits, we can change what we are and how we will live. We need to decide: are we going to spend most of our lives after 50 moving with great difficulty because our hearts and lungs cannot provide enough oxygen to our brain, forgetting things because our brain cells are dying so fast? Or are we going to work today to provide our bodies with the weapons they need to fight off disease and premature aging?

You might think it takes an iron will to enjoy life without your favorite fried foods and sugary desserts. But you will get used to the taste of fresh, healthy food and you'll look and feel great. You can still enjoy the occasional so-called "treat," as long as it's really occasional. You may even find that you don't crave these treats any longer. When your body is well nourished, it is less likely that you will feel hungry (however remember that human appetite is as much psychological as physiological).



Keep this thought in mind: Eat to live well; don't live to eat.



Portions of this section have been excerpted from the book "[EFAs in Health and Disease](#)" (how to order, table of contents, references, notes, excerpts).

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