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# Increased Use Of Meat Substitutes Does More Than Ease Pocketbook

The recent meat boycott focused national attention not only on the high price of meat, but also on the central role played by red meats in the average American diet. During that week, thousands of consumers learned that attractive, well-balanced and inexpensive meals can be prepared using meat substitutes.

But the increased use of such meat substitutes — fish, poultry, eggs and cheese—may mean more than a lower food bill. For many consumers, it may mean a healthier diet.

"Some of the dietary changes encouraged by the meat boycott

would reduce the consumption of saturated, or animal, fats," Dr. Antonio M. Gotto, professor of medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and head of the Lipid Research Clinic at The Methodist Hospital in Houston, explained. Dr. Gotto hastened to add that he was speaking neither for nor against the recent meat boycott.

"In population studies, a correlation has been found between the intake of these animal fats and the incidence of death from arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) and the coronary heart disease," he said. Beef, lamb and pork tend to be relatively higher

in saturated fats than do poultry and fish, Dr. Gotto continued.

Dr. Gotto noted that heart disease starts very early in our society. "Arteriosclerosis is a progressive disease, developing over a number of years. It is associated with a deposition of fatty substances—primarily cholesterol and its ester products—within the arterial wall.

"The cholesterol that accumulates in arteries is deposited from the blood stream. It is reasonable to assume that people with high levels of cholesterol would deposit this fat faster than those with low or normal levels," Dr. Gotto explained.

Medical research has shown that diet does influence the levels of cholesterol and other blood fats.

"Therefore, it seems plausible that the risk of arteriosclerosis can be reduced by limiting the intake of these saturated fats and increasing the consumption of polyunsaturated, or vegetable, fats," Dr. Gotto said.

This theory is currently being investigated in the nation's 12 Lipid Research Clinics.

"In most cases, decreasing the amount of saturated fats in the diet means limiting beef and pork to three meals a week, limiting the consumption of whole milk, eggs and cheese and using polyunsaturated vegetable oils for cooking and salads," Dr. Gotto explained.

"The effect of the meat boycott was to decrease the consumption of red meats, which are very high in saturated fats, and to increase the consumption of meats such as fish and poultry which are relatively poor in these animal fats," he said.

Although not yet proven scientifically, it is a reasonable hypothesis that lowering the level of these saturated fats in the blood should protect against heart disease, Dr. Gotto continued.

"However, before we recommend that the entire population of this country change its eating habits to prevent heart disease, we need proof that adopting such

a diet would indeed lead to such a change," he said.

Decreasing the consumption of red meats is not the only way to cut down on saturated fats, Dr. Gotto noted. Other ways of accomplishing the same thing would be to cook with vegetable oils and reduce the consumption of dairy products, which are generally high in saturated fats.

Although the relationship between diet and heart disease is still being investigated, the American Heart Association and the Intersociety Commission on Heart Disease have recommended a diet in which polyunsaturated fats are substituted for saturated fats, and total cholesterol intake is restricted.

Such a diet, generally recommended for those with blood fat disorders, is not known to have

harmful effects for healthy individuals, Dr. Gotto said.

Should current research reveal that there is a positive relationship between the consumption of animal fats and heart disease, then steps might be taken to reduce the amount of such fats in the average American diet, he concluded.

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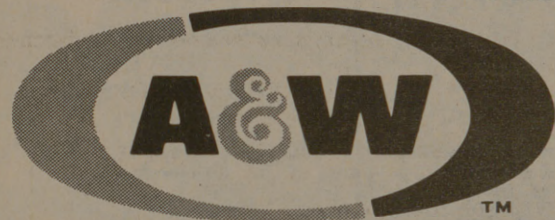
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