

TITLE: IS THE PUBLIC AWARE OF THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION'S (AHA) DIETARY FAT RECOMMENDATIONS AND "THE FACTS ON FAT" INFOGRAPHIC?

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LEARNING OUTCOME: Participants will be able to describe the extent to which the AHA's infographic and guidelines on dietary fats is recognized, and the implications for public education.

ABSTRACT:

Background: In 2017 the AHA released an advisory statement to reaffirm that high dietary intake of saturated fats contributes to cardiovascular disease risk.¹

In addition, the AHA's "The Facts on Fats" infographic is available to facilitate consumer awareness and understanding of dietary fats.² Despite the AHA's efforts to promote healthy fat choices, there is limited research exploring the public's recognition and understanding of these guidelines. We aim to investigate public awareness of the AHA guidelines, recognition of "The Facts on Fats" infographic, and knowledge and behaviors related to dietary fats and heart disease.

Methods: A convenience sample (n=121) at a university and medical center setting completed a web-based survey. A cumulative "knowledge" score was derived by summing responses to questions about knowledge of dietary fats and heart disease based on AHA guidelines, and types of fats depicted on the infographic; higher scores indicated greater knowledge (maximum=16). "Health Eating" and "Unhealthy Eating" scores were calculated based on frequency of selecting foods that were primarily unsaturated fats (maximum = 35) or saturated and trans fats foods (maximum = 49), respectively.

Major Findings: Fifty-six percent of respondents (n=68) were not familiar with the AHA's recommendations. Only 14% of the respondents have seen infographic (n=17). The average knowledge, healthy eating and unhealthy eating scores were 8.17 (SD±1.00), 9.10 (SD±5.6), and 7.66 (SD±5.34), respectively. Awareness of the AHA guidelines, but not of the infographic, were linked to knowledge scores (p = .013). Eating scores did not correlate with the knowledge score.

Conclusions: Awareness of the AHA guidelines, recognition of the infographic and knowledge scores were low. This study highlights the need to improve the public's understanding of the types of dietary fats and heart disease risk and perhaps increase coverage of "The Facts on Fat" infographic.

References:

1. Sacks, F.M., Lichtenstein, A.H., Appel, L.J. Dietary fats and cardiovascular disease, a presidential advisory from the American heart association. *Circulation*. 2017;135:00-00.
2. The facts on fats. American Heart Association. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/fats/the-facts-on-fats>. Published May 2017. Accessed August 10th, 2018.