



Wellness

For BUTTER or WORSE

For many of us, it's a favourite food. But butter is now shunned by those wanting to lose weight. Is it really so bad for you?

by Veenu Singh

FOR MEDIA professional Rakhi Singh, a slice of bread, lavishly buttered, is the next best thing to heaven. But instead of enjoying this simple pleasure as often as she can, Singh eats it on rare occasions, preferring to "dream of butter" instead. The reason: the high-calorie properties of butter.

So is butter always bad for you? "Not everything about butter is bad," explains Dr Virender Anand, Honorary Consultant, Internal Medicine, Moolchand Medicity. "Butter is especially good for growing kids and even adults provided it is eaten in moderation. That's because it's filled with essential vitamins and antioxidants in their most absorbable state and is actually a better source of vitamin A than carrots. You can also find vitamin E and selenium in butter. These protect the heart from free-radical damage."

Honey Khanna, senior dietician at Max Healthcare, agrees, saying, "Butter mostly consists of short and medium chain fatty acids. These protect against cancer and boost immunity. These acids are also more easily broken down for energy, which means it's less likely that the fat in butter will be stored in the body."

Khanna adds, "Butter is a good option for those watching their weight, as it promotes satiety. People who have a liver problem may find it easier to digest food cooked in butter."

Good news, then. But which butter is better?

HOMEMADE BUTTER: Homemade or white butter is high in nutritional value as it is a milk solid and is extremely good for kids. This butter is absorbed easily by the body. Moreover, it is safer than commercial butter as it usually has no preservatives, more water content and no added sodium. However, "since this butter is usually made from full-cream milk, people with lactose intolerance need to be careful

while eating it. Although the calorie content of white butter is slightly less than yellow butter, it should still be consumed in moderation," adds Khanna.

YELLOW BUTTER: This is the most common form. But it is essential to eat this in moderation as it contains more saturated fat, which is bad for weight watchers and those with high cholesterol. Experts advise eating no more than one teaspoon of this per day. As yellow butter is more salty than home-made butter, people with high blood pressure need to limit their consumption. "Apart from the fact that butter is fattening, the combination of bread and butter is even more dangerous. But a little bit of butter with sautéed vegetables or even in your dal is not a bad idea at all," says weight management consultant and *Brunch* columnist Shikha Sharma.

LOW-FAT BREAD SPREADS: Many of these spreads claim to have almost 26 per cent less fat content than butter or margarine. But most nutritionists and dieticians don't buy that argument. "What the manufacturers say may not be exactly true. Their products may have less sodium but are high in vegetable fat. Also, while processing they may accumulate trans fats, which are unhealthy. It is advisable to eat such spreads in moderation," says Sharon Arora, a dietician with GM Modi hospital in Delhi.

PEANUT BUTTER: "Peanut butter is definitely a good option as it is a good source of protein," says Arora. However, Sharma advises some amount of caution. "Peanut butter is very filling and also controls insulin fluctuations, so it is safe for diabetics. But keep in mind that peanuts are fattening. Also, people with a peanut allergy need to be careful about eating it," adds Sharma.

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