

Episode 01

Title: Holistic health defined & good-vs-bad fats interview (episode 01)

Episode Description: We define what holistic health is actually about - and reveal the surprising top killers of Americans today. Then, Dr. Kristen interviews integrative registered dietitian Madelaine Schaufel on the real story on fats in our diet - and of course, debunks some old research about if fat is actually bad for us or if eating fat makes us fat.

Show Notes (transcription):

Intro: *Change your health and your life. It only works if you do. But we can tell you how in bite size chunks. No nonsense evidence based answers to help you boost your health status. Live a life fuelled by Whole Foods nutrition. Focus on prevention and wellness as a lifestyle and how to get the most out of the natural health care system where you're treated as a whole person. Let lifestyle be your medicine. Now here's your host Dr Kristen Halland.*

Dr. Kristen Halland: Let's begin today's episode by defining terms like "holistic" or "natural" because they have a lot of connotations. A holistic or natural person is someone who:

- does healthy things to help the body to function better.
- chooses natural first when appropriate.
- A good holistic practitioner is evidence based. We use research and objective measurements, labs are an example of that.
- someone who wants to find the cause of a problem, not just cover it up and hope it goes away.

The reason we're so focused on improving function is because of what we know from our medical textbooks, like Gray's Anatomy or Dorland's Medical Dictionary. Did you know that all major medical texts in the world adopted an actual definition of health?

Health is the ability to function at 100% mentally, physically, and socially.

It's NOT about symptoms. Just because disease is absent, or you're not on medication, or not in a hospital bed does not equate to health. It's about how well the body works.

To understand how we can help our bodies function better naturally, we need to know what or where the problems are. In the year 1900, people in America had a lower life expectancy and were worried most about dying from tuberculosis, diarrhea, and pneumonia.

We'd advanced quite a bit and now our country has a life expectancy of 85 years old. Presently, the top killers of Americans are: heart disease, stroke, medical errors, cancer, and diabetes type II. How many of that list of 5 are directly tied to diet and lifestyle ? 3 - cancer, diabetes II, and heart disease.

In fact, 90% of all known conditions are caused by diet and lifestyle. When research uses terms like lifestyle and diet, they further define that as: smoking, alcohol use, sedentary lifestyle, diet and nutrition, air quality, obesity, and so forth.

So that means only 5% is genetic, caused by your parents, hereditary. It's not just this one author making a claim. Also proved by big pharma research and even the National Cancer Institute in 2017.

THAT means.... We can change the outcome. Genes aren't our destiny. And we can prevent.

And speaking of aging, did you know that the average American has a heart that's 8 years older than their chronological age (or, the number of birthdays we've had)? One of the theories of aging is that our bodies wear down, kind of your car. We need to regularly maintain them. Can you imagine if you never did any maintenance on your car? You never washed it, never had the oil changes or tires replaced? And then one day, the car breaks down in spectacular fashion. You would not be wondering what could have possibly happened, you'd be saying "I should have taken care of that earlier." Same goes for the body. And it's never too late to start.

Epigenetics is the hot buzz word used to describe how our environment will "turn on" or "turn off" our genetic expression. Our environment, lifestyle, and diet will flip the switch on or off 95% of the time.

I know I said earlier that there's a specific definition of health and I used some strong wording - you heard me say 100%! To me - from what I've experienced in my own health and what I see in practice - being healthy means you're trying to do better than you did yesterday. It means not giving up. It means being willing to try new things and always learn more. We'll take it in bite size chunks, but that's what I'm going to challenge you to do. And everyone, practitioner or patient, will have their own meaning about being healthy so I'd encourage you to reflect on this and discuss.

Up next you're going to hear an interview with our integrative registered dietician that explains what good and bad fats are and the truth about the right types of fats being good for us. For our next segment I'm here with Madeline Schaufel, an integrative registered dietician nutritionist in the suburbs of Chicago. Madeline to introduce yourself can you explain what an integrative registered dietician nutritionist actually is?

Madeline Schaufel: Sure thing, not quite the mouthful right.

Dr. Kristen Halland : Right

Madeline Schaufel: Well let me first start by explaining a little bit about what a registered dietician is. That's someone who's completed undergraduate course work series in Nutrition and Dietetics and then they went on to complete over twelve hundred hours of supervised practice experience in dietetics and then they passed a rigorous board exam to become a registered dietician. And then many registered dietician today also have their Master's degree in something like nutrition or public health. So there's a lot of experience and education that goes into making a dietician or a dietician nutritionist and then what that integrative word means out in front of a dietician nutritionist indicates a specialty. So just to dive into a little bit to what integrative means versus say conventional medicine. Basically integrative indicates like this combination. So it's combining maybe more natural or interventions that seek to address the root cause of the condition. So we're combining that with kind of conventional medicine approaches, so it's definitely not anti-modern medicine, it really combines the best of both worlds. Whereas maybe a purely conventional medicine approach I think things are moving in the right direction even with that, but it often seeks to only treat the symptoms or kind of the outer manifestations of whatever's going on, whereas that integrative approach is more focused on how can we address that root cause.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Yes I love the combination. And how did you come to be doing this work?

Madeline Schaufel: Well that's a really great question. I grew up seeing my mom, she was a family practice physician and I definitely saw her involved in a lot of different public health stuff and I just kind of knew always that I wanted to go into health care. Yeah in my mid-teens I started getting really sick with a lot of different, different things that just symptoms that couldn't be explained and thankfully like even my mom kind of was, she was kind of a little bit of a ground breaker. She was kind of starting to think like that and I was diagnosed with some different food allergies and other kind of health concerns and I started changing my diet and it was like night and day difference, like I was really sick for a long time and so I was kind of hooked on nutrition you could say from a young age and yeah. I was kind of destined to become a dietician I think from there on out and.

Dr. Kristen Halland: So you know what it's like to be the patient too.

Madeline Schaufel: I do, I do yeah and I feel like so many health care providers have that experience. Yeah definitely I think especially in the integrated medicine field. I find a lot of people have, have a back story of having seen it work in their own lives yeah.

Dr. Kristen Halland: I'm really glad you did and I'm glad to have you here today on the episode. We're going to talk today about good fats and bad fats. But let's begin at the beginning. In the 1970s and 1980s when attention started being paid to fats in the media. What happened in the 70s and 80s?

Madeline Schaufel: Well a lot of things happened in the 70s and 80s but I think definitely some research came out, some pretty big research starting a point to that there was a role of fats for sure and one of the kind of unfortunate things that happened is some of the results of that research really got oversimplified and kind of some shady logic started happening because certainly like fats can have an inflammatory or negative role in health but we really missed the mark in the fact that as much as like fats can have a negative role in health, we need the right types of fats to, to play that anti-inflammatory role or that like health rules will be talking about here pretty soon. So we came out with those nutrition messaging that like low or no fat is the way to go, fat is bad, fat will make you fat and that kind of progress. Americans were told that was bad but this had some really unforeseen consequences.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Right so they only saw that first bad part and they didn't yet know about the second piece of the puzzle?

Madeline Schaufel: Yeah exactly. We're really not seeing the whole picture and I can, I can almost see why some of those conclusions were reached and but you know how hindsight is 20:20.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Right of course.

Madeline Schaufel: Yes yeah but so one of the kind of unfortunate things that happened as we went to or shifted to this no or low fat in our food supply like food producers started making low or no fat products and unfortunately to replace the fat a lot of times it was more salt or more sugar or some kind of additive to make like that food kind of seemed like it, like the normal kind of equivalent you know.

Dr. Kristen Halland: So it looks the same, it tastes delicious?

Madeline Schaufel: Yeah exactly and I think it was American, the health of American people that really met the negative consequences there.

Dr. Kristen Halland: So several decades later, what happened after decades of research with the no fat or low fat diet?

Madeline Schaufel: Wow several decades later we're just seeing that the low or no fat kind of thing that originally was kind of this intervention was primarily designed to target heart disease and heart disease has only increased as well as diabetes and obesity. So in the last couple years there's kind of this like wow, we need to like re-examine our conclusions because this is not doing what we wanted it to do. And then we're also seeing just like the impact of, like we're starting to see that like, research showing like the importance of, like the right types of fat like for example like, we think we talk a lot about fat and cholesterol, well guess what? Good fat actually raises your good cholesterol and the balance of the types of fat you're eating affect your other parts of your cholesterol profile. So there's just a lot more to the story that we're starting to see.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Right at the time of this recording in 2017 actually cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of Americans and even some of the other things you mentioned like having too many food additives or food replacements in our food, I mean that's a really hot button issue right now.

Madeline Schaufel: Totally.

Dr. Kristen Halland: So we're now seeing that we didn't understand the full picture, it doesn't necessarily mean that if we eat fat we're going to have heart disease, we're going to get fat and all these bad things. So the old saying didn't really turn out to be true, but am I oversimplifying that? Is there more to that story?

Madeline Schaufel: Ooh I'm glad you asked that because in the same way that we over simplified on one, on one end, we could over simplify on the other end.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Right.

Madeline Schaufel: So that kind of that whole like fat makes you fat, that was an oversimplification. But basically the context of the overall diet really impacts how we process that. So for example a diet high in like those junky or damaged fats combined with a diet high in carbohydrates especially like simple or highly processed carbohydrates, that definitely contributes to weight gain, those two things together. However a diet high in good fats and lower in carbohydrates and mainly like those Whole Foods like more complex carbohydrates that definitely does not contribute to weight gain in the way that like you know fat has really been painted to do. So it really matters to do with what you combine your fat with.

Dr. Kristen Halland: So I'm noticing that theme you've never really said the word calories, all you're talking about is quality.

Madeline Schaufel: Yeah I think that's another reason why fat has gotten such a bad rep because it is the most calorically dense nutrient compared to light protein or carbohydrates but yes calories in does not equal calories out. The diet quality is something that's really been overlooked I think in this focus on calories, not to say that they're not in it, like it's not useful in some settings you know to consider calories, but that's more I think for the kind of the dieticians and the professionals to do. I really prefer to work with my patients and talk to them about food serving sizes and what should the balance of their plate look like. I think that's, people think in like what does my plate look like not, something very visual.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Yeah exactly.

Madeline Schaufel: So yeah for the average person I don't, I don't know if calories are the best thing to focus on.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Yeah I agree, quality is where it's at. So we know now that fats can be good for us and they can help us reduce inflammation. We can use them as a source of energy and to help us absorb our vitamins like vitamin D. They'll support our brain and nerve tissues.

Madeline Schaufel: And I actually wonder if a lot of listeners know they do really interesting things like Fats make hormones. But if I had to summarize you know one of the biggest things we're talking about really is that fats are so powerful they're either anti-inflammatory or pro-inflammation.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Matalan if we're eating fats in the diet, how will we know if it's a good one or a bad one?

Madeline Schaufel: Well that's such a great question. That's really where the rub is right involved this. There's been so much debate about this. So I'll start by giving kind of some general rules of thumb and then we certainly will talk about specific fats and the diet in a minute.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Okay

Madeline Schaufel: So general rule of thumb for inflammatory or damage fat is any time that fat or that oil got heated too high or got heavily processed. So an example of a heavily processed fat would be like, like a trans fat or a hydrogenated oil. You know example of a fat that got heated too high, I would say like maybe be the fat in a fried food or a roasted nut, because the fat once it gets heated so high it gets denatured or damaged and then it is inflammatory to consume.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Okay so if the heat gets too high the fat becomes damaged and then it will create inflammation in our bodies. This leads me to think a little bit about cooking. Are there certain fats that we would use or not use at certain cooking temperatures or scenarios?

Madeline Schaufel: Yeah, yeah great question because you know often that damaging, that heat damaging happens during processing of foods like someone else is making the food whether it's at a restaurant or processed food, but we can do that at home too by heating oil too high. I would say if you're stewing something high heat like stir fry or oven roasting, you're going to want to use a heat stable oil like refined coconut oil

Dr. Kristen Halland: Okay.

Madeline Schaufel: That's a really nice strategy and then olive oil which is, you know, well known to be kind of one of those good fats. I would say that's more of like a moderate heat oil so using it in salad dressing that's a great strategy or just keeping the heat lower like maybe more of a gentle sautee. We've probably all seen that point where there are olive oil starts to smoke.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Right

Madeline Schaufel: That means you got too hot.

Dr. Kristen Halland: So if we're cooking which are the bad oils or fats that we want to avoid?

Madeline Schaufel: Well whether we're cooking or just reading your food label for what fats to avoid in general it's going to be the vegetable oils. I've already mentioned of course definitely avoiding trans and hydrogenated fats, the vegetable oils: like soy bean oil, safflower oil, coconut Oil, not coconut sorry, canola oil no we just mentioned coconut oil is nice because of it's heat stability. So yeah a lot of those like vegetable oils in general.

Dr. Kristen Halland: I feel like I've seen a lot of those oils on ingredients less of pre-packaged processed foods especially safflower oil and sunflower oil seem to be really common. Do you have any tips for one of the sneakiest places you're going to find a bad oil?

Madeline Schaufel: Yes So you know sometimes I'm working with my patients and they're like no, no I don't eat any of these oils and I say well let's talk through some sources. And for people who are who are doing a lot of the right things like health wise, it's a story about salad dressings as a major culprit.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Really?

Madeline Schaufel: Yes

Dr. Kristen Halland: So you're thinking you're doing something healthy by eating a lot of salads but it's in the salad dressing?

Madeline Schaufel: Yes

Dr. Kristen Halland: Don't you hate that?

Madeline Schaufel: And just to clarify you are doing something healthy like the benefits of that salad are still there but to really get ahead of this like anti-inflammatory and pro-inflammatory fats thing, like I would highly recommend preparing your own salad dressing, like I just keep a couple like wide mouth jars at home and just throwing in some vinegar and healthy fat like olive oil and some a little bit like a seasonings or just a little squirt of honey. Yeah it's really easy, really fast, it's a very cost effective thing to do and I actually, now that I've started doing that exclusively, like I really every time I taste a sort of a salad dressing I don't think it's as good. So yeah figuring out what you like and you avoid a lot of food additives that way too because they a put a lot of random stuff in salad dressing so.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Yeah that's a great tip. So if we want to stay anti-inflammatory and we want to eat more good fats in our diet, should we be adding them in with our plated meal or should we be snacking on them?

Madeline Schaufel: I would definitely say both because of the impact on those healthy fats and how you metabolize your food. So healthy fat at any meal or snack because it actually slows down how fast your stomach empties and there's a couple exceptions of maybe when we wouldn't want that to happen, but for most of us, like you know it would be helpful if we could go a little bit longer in between meals and not kind of get that hangry, you know that grumpy like sugar cravings, yeah you know what I'm talking about.

Dr. Kristen Halland: I think a lot of people can relate to that.

Madeline Schaufel: Oh yeah.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Being hangry.

Madeline Schaufel: Yeah so, yeah getting that healthy fat actually, again like slows down how fast the stomach empties and then overall having any time you eat carbohydrates, having some protein and fat with that, actually really slows down how high your blood sugar spikes. So you don't have this crazy roller coaster effect happening of the spike and then this crash and then you feel tired and grumpy and awful you know. So really getting people off a bunch of a rollercoasters, fat with any meal or snack is big important first step.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Fats are even more far reaching and we've already discussed because they can impact blood sugar as well. So if you had to eat a good fat snack, anything you'd recommend?

Madeline Schaufel: Well I think the convenience factor is really there with unroasted nuts since you can just grab a handful and go, but I know some people, you know, doing some avocado is a really nice strategy or you know some olives.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Of all of the nuts as long as they're raw and unroasted are they going to be OK or are there specific nuts we should use?

Madeline Schaufel: Well walnuts would be the highest in omega 3 which you know most of us will talk a little bit more about omega 3, Omega 6 balance in just a sec. But most of us are really low on omega 3 so I like walnuts for that reason, but in general I would just say enjoying a variety of different nuts - we all have kind of our favourite pack nuts usually and I love almonds and there's healthy and bad in each of those nuts. I would also say hemp seeds, chia seeds and flax seeds are really nice source of both fibre and omega 3 as well, so sprinkling those in your salad or into like your smoothie or whatever you're doing, that's a really nice way to add some healthy fats as well.

Dr. Kristen Halland: That sounds good.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Listeners remember that our show notes are available, so you can see all of this information written out along with some of the references we're talking about. They can be found at www.thebalancedoc.com/podcast. Madeline, I feel like they're still more to this picture though. We're talking about good and bad fats but then we mention the words like Omega 6s and omega 3s and balances and ratios. What's the difference between omega 3 and 6?

Madeline Schaufel: Well I don't want to delve too deeply into this because it's it is a complex topic but basically Omega 6 and omega 3 is another way to look at types of fats because basically that Omega 6 or omega 3 label is based on it's like a chemical structure OK, so how it gets processed or what it does in the body. So Omega 6 says we're concerned about, because they primarily feed into inflammatory pathways. They feed into like the stuff that makes your ankle swell when you sprain it or contributes to seasonal allergies or kind of those things that cause like redness or swelling or so omega 6s do that kind of stuff and we need a little bit of that and like you know in a healthy situation, it's just we're like basically set up to make a lot of that all the time because we're eating diets really high in omega 6.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Right. Most Americans will have too much Omega 6 just based on how we've been eating?

Madeline Schaufel: Omega 3 is kind of a complement to that. This is the anti-inflammatory side of the picture. So the omega 3s feed into the pathways that help us make the stuff that shuts off the inflammation. And we need to be able to turn it on in the short term the inflammation and then we need to be able to turn it off or else we have this chronic inflammation problem that we see in most Americans today, you know as we're talking about just contributes to basically all chronic diseases.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Right.

Madeline Schaufel: So omega 3 is our anti-inflammatory kind of powerhouse.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Let's digress briefly into inflammation because inflammation is one of the root causes of most disease processes and when inflammation is low grade and long term in the body, it's one of the quickest ways to age poorly and to age too early. So if we know that the standard American diet is causing us to be more pro-inflammatory we definitely need to figure out how we can shut off or reduce that inflammation and our foods and the fats that we're choosing are either going to fight inflammation or to fuel it. Now in the clinic when you're working with patients we can actually

measure people's good and bad fats or their omega 3s and omega 6s using lab values. But is there any way that a patient would know if they have an imbalance in good and bad fats? Would they have symptoms?

Madeline Schaufel: It's a complex question to answer because like good and bad fats like affect like so many different areas of health but some of the ones that really like jump out to me is definitely when someone is having that hangry cycle blood sugar roller coaster. I'm pretty quick of picking up on that. Another one is when we see like they're C reactive protein elevated off and that like there's probably a Fats imbalance feeding into that although it's not conclusive and

Dr. Kristen Halland: And C reactive protein is an inflammatory marker.

Madeline Schaufel: Exactly

Dr. Kristen Halland: So if they have inflammation we know for sure there's probably too little good fats in the body.

Madeline Schaufel: Yes certainly other things like arthritis joint pain, memory issues like all of those can are usually there's a fats issue in the background there. The tricky thing about any of those things I just mentioned though is, it's like so many different things are feeding it and fats are a major player but it's never the only thing.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Right.

Madeline Schaufel: That's why we really focus and we have this kind of comprehensive lifestyle approach that we really advocate.

Dr. Kristen Halland: I agree, that's why in practice I love using objective measurements labs are one example to help you find the cause of the problem. An example I love is when someone has poor skin hair or nails a lot of people right away will think that they need to take more B vitamins for the hair and nails to grow better, but that also has strong ties to missing a lot of good fats in the diet. So it really is you know all encompassing people's health pictures can get quite interesting and complex.

Madeline Schaufel: Oh I almost forgot some other really good examples! The fats really connect to so many areas of health but definitely anytime we see someone with an imbalanced cholesterol profile, like it could be too high the bad kinds of cholesterol or too low of the good kinds of cholesterol. That absolutely screams fatty acid imbalance as well as like nervous disorders like even if it's our mental health like depression or anxietyor in more complex nervous conditions usually there's a fatty acid kind of component to that as well.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Which really goes back to the original conversation of fats doing good things for the body and what they're used for. Fats protect the brain and nervous tissue.

Madeline Schaufel: That kind of makes sense when you get them to start thinking about function, kind of a functional approach.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Right. This was such a great topic and I think we had a little bit of struggle with planning this topic because we want to do a ten hour podcast on this and we had to restrict ourselves and just try to keep it a little bit briefer! But I'm excited for the listeners to get deeper into the lifestyle and the nutritional habits that help us put out the fire of inflammation. We've covered a lot already but if you had to suggest only one or two things that people could do this week to start fighting inflammation what would you challenge them with?

Madeline Schaufel: Good question. Well I would say the first thing is you need to start reading your food labels. You need to start really identifying where these kind of junkie fats are sneaking in and really actively or intentionally trying to decrease your consumption of poor quality fats.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Right

Madeline Schaufel: But it's a two pronged approach here so we're trying to like avoid the bad fats but then we also need to be really being intentional about getting the good fat so that's with every meal or snack at least a serving of healthy fat.

Dr. Kristen Halland: If you think about the standard American diet and you think about the snacks you suggested like unroasted nuts or avocado or Olive, we don't really have a lot of that built into the American diet. So we do have to be intentional and I really like that word because intentional eating is such a hot concept in nutrition.

Madeline Schaufel: Yeah definitely trying to keep that stuff around the house or in the in the drawer at your office making that kind of the good choice, the easy choice you know or else it's going to be something else that you're reaching for.

Dr. Kristen Halland: Right and we did have some further reading for the listeners to get deeper into this topic. They might enjoy Dr Mark Hyman book called Eat Fat Get Thin or if you happen to be a female of a certain age and wisdom, if you know what I mean, you might enjoy the book called The Hormone Reset Diet by Dr Sarah Gottfried. Madeline it was great to have you on the episode this was great information thank you so much.

Madeline Schaufel: It was a pleasure to be here.

Dr. Kristen Halland: You can contact Madeleine through our website, thebalancedoc.com/podcast which is also where the show notes can be found.

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