**Go easy on the beef jerky & chocolate! High intake of saturated fats ups heart disease risk**

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NEW YORK: Love to eat hard cheese, whole milk, butter, beef, and chocolae? Beware, as a new study suggests that regular consumption of such major saturated fatty acids can increase the risk of coronary heart disease. 

These should be replaced with unsaturated fats, whole grain carbohydrates or plant proteins, as part of an effective preventive approach, the study suggested. 

The findings showed that replacing 1 per cent of the daily energy intake from the combined group of these major saturated fatty acids with equivalent energy from polyunsaturated fats, monounsaturated fats, whole grain carbohydrates, or plant proteins, was estimated to reduce coronary heart disease risk by 6-8 per cent. 

"Dietary recommendations should remain on replacing total saturated fat with unsaturated fats or whole grain carbohydrate, as an effective approach towards preventing coronary heart disease," said Geng Zong, doctoral student at Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health. 

For the study, the team analysed data from two large US longitudinal cohort studies that involved 73,147 women between 1984-2012, and 42,635 men between 1986-2010 

The results revealed that the most commonly consumed major saturated fatty acids were lauric acid, myristic acid, palmitic acid and stearic acid, and accounted for around 9-10 per cent of total energy in the participants. Each of these saturated fatty acids was associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease. 

In addition, the researchers estimated the reduction in risk that would be associated with replacement of saturated fatty acids with more healthy nutrients. 

For each 1 per cent energy substitution, these risk reductions were 23 cases per 100,000 person years for polyunsaturated fat, 15 cases per 100,000 person years for monounsaturated fat, 18 cases per 100,000 person years for whole grain carbohydrates, and 20 cases per 100,000 person years for plant proteins, the researchers stated in the study published in the journal The BMJ. 