

Is Health Advice Worth The Candle?

By **Alexander Baron** - Feb 12, 2015



Healthy Foods

How can you live a long and healthy life? Maybe not the way you think! This week I went to the funeral of a man who was a lifelong drinker and smoker; if the anecdotes that were passed around at the hotel after the service were anything to go by, he was both a heavy smoker and a very heavy drinker. Yet he passed away at the reasonably advanced age of 87.

Nine years ago, another man, someone I knew very well, died at the age of 56 from a particularly virulent form of cancer; he was a fitness fanatic: a non-smoker who worked out regularly and took vitamin supplements. A woman who worked in the same office died two years later at the age of 78; she was a regular smoker.

That evidence may be purely anecdotal and selective, but it underlines an inconvenient fact of life and death, however long a life you aspire to, with the exception of the successful

suicide, your fate is not in your hands.

This week saw the eruption of another argument over saturated fat; like drinking to excess and smoking period, the consumption of saturated fat was said to be bad for your health and linked – whatever that means – to coronary heart disease, stroke and all manner of other life-threatening ailments. Now it appears that saturated fat is **not so bad after all**. Well, not just now, some people have been telling us this all along.

Those of a certain vintage may remember the intensive campaign against saturated fat in the 1980s. To the lay reader the theory certainly sounded good, fat clogs up your arteries, raises your cholesterol level, and leads to both heart attacks and strokes. Then along came James Le Fanu, a London doctor who debunked these claims in his book *Eat Your Heart Out*

Before Le Fanu, all manner of garbage was peddled about the benefits of a high fibre diet reducing the chance of stomach cancer, the perils of eating meat, and so on, but as Jacques Fresco pointed out, rabbits get cancer too. And when did you last see a rabbit tucking into a Big Mac?

What about exercising regularly then? We are constantly being reminded that the young especially do not exercise enough, and that we are turning into a nation of couch potatoes. Recently however there has been much talk about too much exercise being worse than not enough. That claim is not exactly new, as is attested by the sad tale of a certain Mr Pheidippides. Sportsmen suffer all manner of injuries from hamstrings in runners to concussion in boxing and other sports. For sportswomen, there can be other problems, related to women's issues, in particular, fertility.

What are we to make of all this conflicting health advice?

Realistically, what can your doctor tell you to do if you are in poor health? Stop smoking, stop or at least cut down on your drinking, don't overeat, and try to get some exercise. There are other things some of us may be able to do. It may be better for your health to live in the country rather than in the city, especially on the coast, and the climate may not be

good for your health, but if realistically you cannot simply pack up and move to sunnier climes, there is probably not much you can do apart from follow your doctor's advice.

It has often been said that the only two certainties in life are death and taxes; if you spend too much time worrying about either, you may well send yourself to an early grave, so the best thing is to try not to. When your time comes, there will be little if anything you can do about it, regardless of whatever health fad is currently holding sway.



Alexander Baron

<http://www.infotextmanuscripts.org>