

A brief history of fat

An aperitif of fatty facts

1789: Substances from bile stones shown to dissolve in alcohol, later analysed and named 'cholesterine' (eventually 'cholesterol') by Michel Chevreul.

1807: First sales of a mass-market soap, Pears, manufactured using tallow (animal fat) and other fats.

1827: Fat recognised as important dietary nutrient, alongside protein and carbohydrate, by chemist William Prout.

1832: Adolphe Quetelet devises index for normal body weight relative to height, later renamed 'body mass index'.

1838: Louis René Lecanu shows cholesterol is present in human blood.

1869: Margarine invented by French chemist Hippolyte Mège-Mouriès in response to a request made by Napoleon III for a cheaper substitute for butter.

1899: The first 'membranologist', Charles Ernest Overton, proposes that cell membranes have a lipid-containing layer.

1926: The word 'lipid', covering all fats and associated substances, first appears in a paper by Warren Sperry. 'Lipide' and 'lipoid' also used till 1960.

1930: George and Mildred Burr publish paper on importance of fatty acids to diet of rats.

1959: First issue of the Journal of Lipid Research is published, following a decade of intensive research in lipid metabolism.

1963: Jean Nidetch founds Weight Watchers and hosts the first public meeting in a loft in Queens, New York.

1972: Garth Nicolson and Seymour Singer propose the 'fluid mosaic model' of cell membranes.

2011: Denmark introduces the first fat tax, on foods containing high levels of saturated fat. Withdrawn in 2012.

2014: Worldwide, over 1.9bn adults and over 42m children under five are classified as overweight or obese.

2015: Two US doctors write a paper urging the US government to remove upper limit of fat in diet.

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource first appeared in 'Big Picture: Fat' in December 2015. Published by the Wellcome Trust, a charity registered in England and Wales, no. 210183.

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