

letter to the editor

To the Editor:

Podesta, Murphy, and Dowling (1) found large amounts of sulfated bile acids in human feces. These findings might be caused by an incorrect measurement of the sulfated fecal bile acids. Their method is based on a technique for the analysis of urinary bile acid sulfates. For feces, however, it is necessary to extract the bile acids from the solids with ethanol. In the way they perform the extraction there can be formation of ethyl esters of bile acids, which escape the quantitation by gas-liquid chromatography (2). During the saponification, which has to follow solvolysis, these ethyl esters are split and will be quantitated by gas-liquid chromatography. The difference in bile acid concentrations found with and without solvolysis and saponification are not caused by sulfated bile acids alone, but include also the amount of bile acid ethyl esters formed during the extraction of bile acids from the feces. Thus a false quantity of sulfated bile acids is found. In contrast with Podesta et al. (1), neither we (unpublished experiments) nor Islam, Raicht, and Cohen (3) nor McJunckin et al. (4) found large

amounts of sulfated bile acids in the feces of healthy humans on a Western diet.

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