

The Skinny on Low Carbohydrate Diets

Low Carbohydrate Diet Craze!

In the midst of America's obesity epidemic, many people are turning to popular low carbohydrate (carb) diet books and special foods. The Atkin's Diet and The South Beach Diet are the two most popular low carb diets on the market. In 2003, it was estimated that 32 million people were following a low carb diet. But, are low carb diets effective and are they safe?

Low carb diets often promise:

- Quick weight loss
- Less hunger
- Unlimited amounts of some favorite foods



Promise of Quick Weight Loss

Low carb diets promise quick weight loss – and they deliver – at least for the first 1-2 weeks.

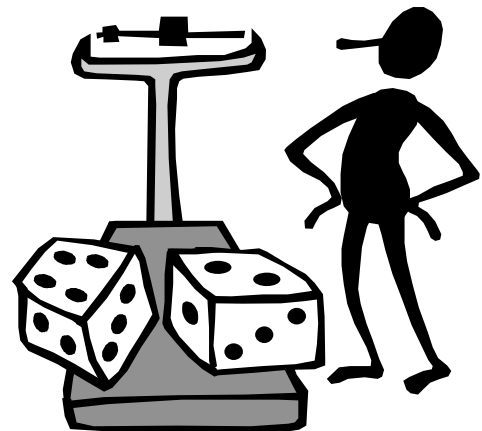
The author of one diet book promises you'll lose 8-13 lbs the first 2 weeks – but don't get too excited. This is merely water loss, not fat loss – and, it will return once you start eating carbohydrate again. But, it is motivating.

Are They Safe?

Not in the long-term. Eating a diet with too much protein, fat (saturated fat), and cholesterol could result in serious health problems if you stay on the diet for a long period of time. Plus, the low carb diets cut out many cancer- and disease-preventing vitamins, fiber and other nutrients found in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. You can't replace these nutrients by taking a vitamin supplement.

Long-term use of low carb diets may increase the risk of:

- Bone loss (osteoporosis)
- Kidney stones
- Gout
- Kidney disease
- Heart disease
- Some types of cancer



Long-Term Weight Loss? Not Likely!



In the short term, for as long as you follow a low carb diet, you will lose weight primarily because **you are eating fewer calories** than you normally do. High protein meals may create a feeling of fullness and less hunger, causing you to eat less. However, many people are unable to follow a low carb diet for more than a few months – often due to boredom.

Currently, there are no studies to show that low-carb diets work any better or worse in the long-term (longer than 6 months to a year) in achieving weight loss and helping maintain weight loss.

What Works Long-Term?

The National Weight Control Registry (a registry of successful weight loss maintainers) has kept a record of over 3,000 people who have lost an average of 66 pounds and have kept off a minimum of 30 pounds for an average of 5 years. Below are some of their strategies for success:

- A reduced calorie meal plan (Low-fat, high carbohydrate diet)
- Eat breakfast daily
- Gradual weight loss of 1 to 2 pounds a week.
- Physical activity at least 30 minutes most days of the week.
- Monitor progress (keep food journal and weigh weekly)
- Support from a dietitian, or other weight loss counselor.



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