

# the truth about low carb diets

With all the information in the media lately about high protein/low carb diets, you may be wondering whether you should be switching to bacon and eggs for breakfast, and holding the toast.

While there is some research to suggest that diets higher in protein may have benefits for short-term weight loss, there is no proof that they help with managing weight in the long term. There are many concerns about the potential long-term health implications of this type of eating plan; one which restricts wholegrains, fruits and many vegetables.

For example, research indicates that:

- ◆ A high intake of fruit and vegetables has been proven to protect against many types of cancer.
- ◆ Higher intakes of wholegrains are associated with reduced risk of diseases including diabetes, heart disease and cancer.
- ◆ High intakes of saturated fat, found mainly in animal foods, are linked with heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.
- ◆ High intakes of red meat, particularly charred and processed meats, may increase the risk of developing cancer.
- ◆ High intakes of animal protein may worsen kidney function for those with underlying kidney problems, while plant proteins, particularly soy protein, may protect the kidneys. This is particularly important for people with diabetes, an increasing health problem in our society.
- ◆ Over the long term, a high animal protein intake may have harmful effects on bone health, possibly increasing the risk of developing osteoporosis.
- ◆ Vegetarians living in western countries typically have very good health, with lower rates of obesity, heart disease, diabetes and many cancers as well as increased longevity. Vegetarians also generally have a lower body weight than non-vegetarians, despite the fact that they usually consume a diet higher in carbohydrates.
- ◆ The US Weight Control Registry, which has studied people who have successfully lost weight and kept it off, found that only 3% of these people followed a low carb diet to achieve success. Most were following a low fat diet and exercising for at least one hour per day.

The only way to achieve permanent weight loss, whilst also improving your health, is to follow a sustainable healthy eating plan in combination with regular exercise. Your eating plan should include plenty of fruits, vegetables and wholegrain breads and cereals, moderate amounts of lean protein foods and small amounts of healthy fats. When it comes to carbohydrates, you don't need to cut them out, just choose the right ones. Carbohydrate foods which have a low glycemic index (GI) have many health benefits and can help you lose weight; they fill you up for longer and keep your blood glucose and insulin levels lower, making it easier to burn fat.

For more information on GI, see the University of Sydney GI website, [www.glycemicindex.com](http://www.glycemicindex.com), or get a copy of *The New Glucose Revolution*, by Jennie Brand-Miller.

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