

Low-carbohydrate Diet

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Introduction

Weight loss diets that are low in carbohydrates, such as the 'Atkins Diet' or the 'South Beach Diet', have been inappropriately criticized in the media as being inherently unhealthy because they encourage a higher fat consumption. The truth of the matter is, that almost any diet which effects weight loss: will lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure, lower the incidence of type-2 diabetes, and increase cardiovascular health.

Eating a low-carb diet improves the hormonal signalling involved in obesity and improves the sense of fullness, allowing weight loss; according to a 2007 study conducted by Matthew R. Hayes, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pennsylvania.

The Atkins Diet: Ten Easy Steps to Induction

This is an excerpt from the book: Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution, Revised Edition by Robert C. Atkins, 2003:

Ready to start losing weight on Atkins? Induction is the first phase of the Atkins Nutritional Approach™. Stay on it for at least two weeks, and follow these 10 steps to get on your way:

1. Eat either three regular-size meals a day or four or five smaller meals. Don't skip meals or go more than six waking hours without eating.
2. Eat liberal amounts of protein, such as poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs and red meat, as well as natural fats, such as butter, mayo, olive oil and safflower oil (see the [Acceptable Foods List](#)).
3. Eat about 20 grams of carbs each day, mostly in the form of salad greens and other vegetables. You should eat at least four cups of salad vegetables, or three cups of salad vegetables plus one cup of other vegetables (see the [Acceptable Vegetables List](#)).
4. Don't eat any fruit (except for avocados, tomatoes and olives), bread, pasta, grains, starchy vegetables or dairy products other than cheese, cream or butter. Don't eat nuts or seeds in the first two weeks. Foods that combine protein and carbohydrates, such as lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans and other legumes, are not permitted at this [Acceptable](#) time.
5. If you're hungry between meals, enjoy a low-carb snack, such as a hard-boiled egg, some cheese, olives or a low-carb snacks.
6. Do not eat anything that is not on the [Foods List](#).
7. Take a daily multivitamin, essential fatty acids and a fiber supplement.

8. Adjust the quantity of protein you eat to suit your appetite, especially as it decreases. Eat the amount that makes you feel satisfied but not stuffed.
9. Limit coffee, tea and soft drinks that contain caffeine to one or two cups per day. Excessive caffeine has been shown to cause unstable blood sugar and trigger cravings.
10. Drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water each day to hydrate your body, avoid constipation and flush out the byproducts of burning fat.

The Atkins Diet: Acceptable Foods

These are the foods you may eat liberally during [Induction](#):

All fish. All fowl. All shellfish.* All meat. All eggs.**

*Oysters and mussels are higher in carbs than other shellfish, so limit them to four ounces per day.

**Processed meats, such as ham, bacon, pepperoni, salami, hot dogs and other luncheon meats—and some fish—may be cured with added sugar and will contribute carbs. Try to avoid meat and fish products cured with nitrates, which are known carcinogens. Also beware of products that are not exclusively meat, fish or fowl, such as imitation fish, meatloaf and breaded foods. Finally, do not consume more than four ounces of organ meats a day.

OTHER FOODS THAT ARE ACCEPTABLE DURING INDUCTION

Cheese

You can consume three to four ounces daily of the following full-fat, firm, soft and semisoft aged cheeses*, including:

- cheddar
- cow, sheep and goat cheese
- cream cheese
- Gouda
- mozzarella
- Roquefort and other blue cheeses
- Swiss

*All cheeses have some carbohydrate content. The quantity you eat should be governed by that knowledge. The rule of thumb is to count 1 ounce of cheese as equivalent to 1 gram of carbohydrate. Note that cottage cheese, farmer's cheese and other fresh cheeses are not permitted during Induction. No "diet" cheese, cheese spreads or whey cheeses are permitted. Individuals with known yeast symptoms, dairy allergy or cheese intolerance must avoid cheese. Imitation cheese products are not allowed, except for soy or rice cheese—but check the carbohydrate content.

Vegetables

You can have two to three cups per day of:

- alfalfa sprouts
- daikon
- mushrooms
- arugula
- endive
- parsley
- bok choy
- escarole
- peppers
- celery
- fennel
- radicchio
- chicory
- jicama
- radishes
- chives
- lettuce
- romaine lettuce
- cucumber
- mâche
- sorrel

These salad vegetables are high in phytonutrients and provide a good source of fiber.

Other Vegetables

You can have one cup per day of these veggies if salad does not exceed two cups. The following vegetables are slightly higher in carbohydrate content than the salad vegetables:

- artichoke
- celery root
- pumpkin
- artichoke hearts
- rhubarb
- asparagus
- chard
- sauerkraut
- bamboo shoots
- collard greens
- scallions
- dandelion
- snow peas
- bean sprouts
- dandelion greens
- spaghetti squash
- beet greens
- eggplant
- spinach
- broccoli
- hearts of palm

- string or wax beans
- broccoli rabe
- kale
- summer squash
- brussels
- kohlrabi
- tomato
- bean sprouts
- leeks
- turnips
- cabbage
- okra
- water chestnuts
- cauliflower
- onion
- zucchini

If a vegetable, such as spinach or tomato, cooks down significantly, it must be measured raw so as not to underestimate its carb count.

Salad Garnishes

- crumbled crisp bacon
- grated cheese
- minced hard-boiled egg
- sautéed mushrooms
- sour cream

Spices

All spices to taste, but make sure none contain added sugar.

Herbs

- basil
- garlic
- rosemary
- cayenne pepper
- ginger
- sage
- cilantro
- oregano
- tarragon
- dill
- pepper
- thyme

For salad dressing, use oil and vinegar (but not balsamic vinegar, which contains sugar) or lemon juice and herbs and spices. Prepared salad dressings without added sugar and no more than two carbs per tablespoon serving are also fine.

Acceptable Fats and Oils

Many fats, especially certain oils, are essential to good nutrition. Olive oil is particularly valuable. All other vegetable oils are allowed, the best being canola, walnut, soybean, grapeseed, sesame, sunflower and safflower oils, especially if they are labeled "cold-pressed" or "expeller-pressed." Do not cook polyunsaturated oils, such as corn, soybean and sunflower oil, at high temperatures or allow to brown or smoke.

Butter is allowed. Margarine should be avoided, not because of its carbohydrate content, but because it is usually made of trans fats (hydrogenated oils), which are a serious health hazard. (Some nonhydrogenated margarines are available in health-food stores.)

You don't have to remove the skin and fat from meat or fowl. Salmon and other cold-water fish are an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids.

Remember that trying to do a low-fat version of the Atkins Nutritional Approach™ will interfere with fat burning and derail your weight loss.

Artificial Sweeteners

You must determine which artificial sweeteners agree with you, but the following are allowed: sucralose (marketed as Splenda™), saccharin, cyclamate and acesulfame-K. Natural sweeteners ending in the suffix "-ose," such as maltose, etc., should be avoided. However, most sugar alcohols have a minimal effect on blood sugar and are acceptable.

Saccharin has been extensively studied, and harmful effects were produced in the lab when fed to rats only in extremely high doses. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has removed saccharin from its list of carcinogens, basing its decision upon a thorough review of the medical literature and the National Institute of Science's statement that there is "no clear association between saccharin and human cancer." It can be safely consumed in moderation, meaning no more than three packets a day. Saccharin is marketed as Sweet'n Low™.

The Atkins preference, however, is sucralose (Splenda™), the only sweetener made from sugar. Sucralose is safe, noncaloric and does not raise blood sugar. It has been used in Canada for years, and the FDA recently approved it after reviewing more than 100 studies conducted over the past 20 years. Note that each packet of sugar substitute contains about 1 gram of carbohydrate, so don't forget to include the amount in your daily totals.

Acceptable Beverages

Be sure to drink a minimum of eight eight-ounce glasses of water each day, including:

- Filtered water
- Mineral water
- Spring water
- Tap water

Additionally, you can have the following:

- Clear broth/bouillon (not all brands; read the label)
- Club soda
- Cream, heavy or light (limit to two to three tablespoons a day; note carbohydrate content)
- Decaffeinated coffee or tea*
- Diet soda made with sucralose (Splenda™); be sure to count the carbs
- Essence-flavored seltzer (must say "no calories")
- Herb tea (without barley or any fruit sugar added)
- Lemon juice or lime juice (note that each contains 2.8 grams carbohydrate per ounce); limit to two to three tablespoons

*Excessive caffeine may cause unstable blood sugar and should be avoided by those who suspect they are caffeine dependent. Everyone should try to avoid caffeine. Grain beverages (coffee substitutes) are not allowed. Alcoholic beverages are also not permitted during Induction; those low in carbohydrates are an option, in moderation, in later phases.

Special Category Foods

To add variety, each day you can also eat 10 to 20 olives, half a small avocado, an ounce of sour cream or three ounces of unsweetened heavy cream, as well as two to three tablespoons of lemon juice or lime juice. But be aware that these foods occasionally slow down weight loss in some people, and may need to be avoided in the first two weeks. If you seem to be losing slowly, moderate your intake of these foods.

Convenience Foods

Although it is important that you eat primarily unprocessed foods, some controlled carb food products can come in handy when you are unable to find appropriate food, can't take time for a meal or need a quick snack. More and more companies are creating healthy food products that can be eaten during the Induction phase of Atkins. Just remember two things:

1. Not all convenience food products are the same, so check labels and carbohydrate content.
2. While any of these foods can make doing Atkins easier, don't overdo it. Remember, you must always follow [The Rules of Induction](#).

The Atkins Diet: The Rules of Induction

This phase of the Atkins Nutritional Approach™ must be followed precisely to achieve success. If you do it at all incorrectly you may prevent weight loss and end up saying, "Here is another weight-loss plan that didn't work." Also, check out "Extra Cautions," below.

Memorize the following rules as though your life depends upon it. In fact, it does.

1. Eat either three regular-size meals a day or four or five smaller meals. Do not skip meals or go more than six waking hours without eating.
2. Eat liberally of combinations of [fat](#) and [protein](#) in the form of poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs and red meat, as well as pure, natural fat in the form of butter, mayonnaise, olive oil, safflower, sunflower and other vegetable oils (preferably expeller-pressed or cold-pressed).

3. Eat no more than 20 grams a day of [carbohydrate](#), most of which must come in the form of salad greens and other vegetables. You can eat approximately three loosely packed cups of salad, or two cups of salad plus one cup of other vegetables (see [Acceptable Foods](#)).
4. Eat absolutely no fruit, bread, pasta, grains, starchy vegetables or dairy products other than cheese, cream or butter. Do not eat nuts or seeds in the first two weeks. Foods that combine protein and carbohydrates, such as chickpeas, kidney beans and other legumes, are not permitted at this time.
5. Eat nothing that isn't on the [Acceptable Foods](#) list. And that means *absolutely* nothing. Your "just this one taste won't hurt" rationalization is the kiss of failure during this phase of Atkins.
6. Adjust the quantity you eat to suit your appetite, especially as it decreases. When you're hungry, eat the amount that makes you feel satisfied, but not stuffed. When you're not hungry, eat a small controlled carbohydrate snack to accompany your nutritional supplements.
7. Don't assume any food is low in carbohydrate—instead, *read labels*. Check the carb count (it's on every package) or use a carbohydrate gram counter.
8. Eat out as often as you wish but be on guard for hidden carbs in gravies, sauces and dressings. Gravy is often made with flour or cornstarch, and [sugar](#) is sometimes an ingredient in salad dressing.
9. Use [sucralose](#) or [saccharin](#) as a sweetener. Be sure to count each packet of any of these as 1 gram of carbs.
10. Avoid coffee, tea and soft drinks that contain [caffeine](#). Excessive caffeine has been shown to cause low blood sugar, which can make you crave sugar.
11. Drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water each day to hydrate your body, avoid [constipation](#) and flush out the by-products of burning fat.
12. If you are constipated, mix a tablespoon or more of psyllium husks in a cup or more of water and drink daily. Or mix ground flaxseed into a shake or sprinkle wheat bran on a salad or vegetables.
13. At a minimum, take a good daily multivitamin with [minerals](#), including [potassium](#), [magnesium](#) and [calcium](#), but without [iron](#).