LOW-CARB DIETING SECRETS!

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Thank you.

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I) INTRODUCTION TO LOW-CARB

To help with weight issues and for overall improved health, many people turn to diets. In fact, government statistics show that while about 65 percent of Americans are overweight, 38 percent are actually doing something about it.

And according to a recent survey by the National Health Institute, about a third of overweight Americans who are trying to lose weight, are doing so by eating less carbohydrates (carbs) largely because of the increased popularity of fad diets like Atkins Diet and the South Beach Diet.

Although there have certainly been other low-carb or low-sugar diet plans before, and more will most assuredly come out in the years ahead, let's take a look at the basics behind many of the major plans. And let's take a look at how they fit into the real world today. Because while it might be great to lower the body's sugar content and be healthier, wouldn't it be great to learn how to do so while being part of this fast-paced world?

In the world of instant messaging, quick Internet interaction and the already multi-faceted day-to-day hectic schedules, dietary food budgeting, planning, preparing and shopping are issues that can become major sources of stress and reasons for dieting failure. Dual income families on-the-go and other super-busy wage earners and dieters often already suffer from more than their share of everyday stressors like fears of being laid off, their jobs being relocated or terminated, juggling more than one job, dependents (both elderly and minors) and trying to fund and juggle continuing education into their lives, budgets, and daily routines.

People want and need simpler solutions. And they need simpler dieting plans. Forget spending mega bucks on gourmet, hard-to-find items. Forget spending hours just to prepare meals. And forget counting, measuring, and weighing ingredients.

Either a low-carb plan fit into real-world lives, or it doesn't. First we'll take a look at some basic terms and definitions to help understand the science behind low-carb plans. Let's see how many of the major players' plans measure up.

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LOW-CARB, SLOW CARB

In a nutshell, there are two kinds of carbohydrates, simple and complex. Some refer to them as bad and good carbs, fast and slow digestion carbs and other possibly confusing lingo. Here's the scoop.

SIMPLE CARBS

Foods with simple or refined carbohydrates most often have a low nutrient content and a high-glycemic index. They are quick to digest and can cause blood sugar to soar then fall dramatically within a short span of time. In order to keep the body running more healthy and stable, health advisors recommend that these type foods be limited.

Examples of these simple carbs are white bread, potatoes, bananas, and sugary treats like cookies, candy, cupcakes and cakes, and soda beverages like popular cola products.

COMPLEX CARBS

Foods with complex carbohydrates contain many nutrients and have a low- to moderate-glycemic index. Higher fiber content in these foods means slower digestion, which is healthier for the body. And these foods are considered good choices by health advisors.

Examples of these complex carbs are whole grains, most fruits and vegetables. Legumes, plants of the pea or bean family, are also in this category.

WHICH IS BEST????

While studies like one from the University of Arkansas for *Medical Sciences* in January of 2004 show that low-carb diets can help with weight loss; the carbs need to be of the complex, low-glycemic type. Notable is that a total avoidance of the simple carbs is not necessary, either. In other words a treat now and then, in moderation (and approved per your dietary advisor or in accordance with your health practitioner), should be fine.

As a side note, your teeth will also be healthier without the build up of sugar decay from simple carb foods. So healthier smiles will shine with healthier bodies.

OTHER HELPFUL TERMS

Here are some other terms to help explain the science and health issues behind low-carbohydrate dietary planning solutions. Note these are only basic definitions and can be explored at your leisure through other resources to further define their roles in the body's health system.

CALORIE
A calorie is a measure of heat. Calorie also refers to a measure of the amount of energy a body gets from food. In a nutshell, the more calories in food, the more energy is required for the body to use up the nutrients.

CARBOHYDRATE

A carbohydrate is one of three major nutrients that provide the body with energy. Carbohydrates are made up of either single sugars or bound strings of sugar. Examples of single sugars (simple carbohydrates) are sucrose or table sugar, fructose or fruit sugar and lactose or dairy sugar. Bound strings of sugar or complex carbohydrates that are found in plants are often called starches. Examples of digestible kinds of complex carbs are wheat flour or potato starch. A non-digestible example is cellulose from celery. Carbs are converted by the body into sugar and used for energy. Unused carbs are stored in the body as fat.

FAT
A Fat is one of the three major nutrient groups that provide energy to the body. Fat is derived from animal or plant oil sources. It is broken down by the body into simpler fats and are burned or stored in the body.

FRUCTOSE
Fructose is sugar derived from plants, especially corn, that is used to sweeten commercial food products like sodas and other prepared foods. First gained widespread popularity in the 1970s and is usually listed in ingredients as “high-fructose corn syrup”.

GLUCOSE
Glucose is referred to as blood sugar. All carbohydrates whether simple or complex are converted by the body into sugar and the sugar within the body’s bloodstream is of this form. The level of glucose in the blood is the main stimulus for insulin secretion.

GLUCAGON
Glucagon is a hormone produced by the pancreas that encourages fat cells to convert their stores to glucose and release them for energy use. Glucagon must be released for the body to release and break down body fat. The pancreas cannot efficiently release both glucagon and insulin and will not release glucagon if blood sugar and insulin levels are high.

GLYCOGEN
Glycogen is the main form of carbohydrate storage in animals and occurs primarily in the liver and muscle tissue. It is readily converted to glucose as needed by the body to satisfy its energy needs. Also called animal starch.

GLYCEMIC INDEX
The glycemic index is a measure of how quickly individual foods will raise your body’s blood sugar level.

INSULIN
Insulin is one of two main hormones produced by the pancreas and the body’s major metabolic hormone. When the blood’s glucose increases, insulin is released by the pancreas to help transfer glucose into the cells for energy. Insulin also helps convert extra glucose to storage in fatty tissue, and helps promote amino acids which are turned into protein and stored in muscle. In the liver, it aids in extra glucose being stored as glycogen. Insulin can raise cholesterol levels and cause retention of fluids and salt and it gets in the way of breaking down stored fat. A lack of adequate insulin or lack of sufficient