LOW CARB FAQ

23 Most Frequently Asked Questions About The Low Carb Lifestyle

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Keto or Low Carb Diets are all the rage these days. They have become popular because unlike many diets they work for most people who adhere to the rules of low carb/high fat eating.

In many ways once you have made the commitment to the low carb high fat (LCHF) lifestyle and managed to get through the first few days or sometimes weeks of side effects also referred to as keto flu, it is remarkably easy to follow the diet.

If you are looking for a healthier way to eat, or like me has gained and lost hundreds of pounds over the years, I would imagine that you have many questions and possible concerns.

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions about low carb eating:

Q: What is a low carb diet?

A: The Ketogenic diet is a very low-carb, high-fat diet. Carbs are replaced with healthy fats and the reduction of carbs triggers a metabolic state known as lipolysis. Lipolysis is a process that occurs when the body begins to use fat for energy, instead of carbohydrates obtained from food. The by-products of lipolysis are ketones and ketosis is the secondary process of lipolysis.

By depriving the body of carbohydrates, which is converted to glucose and typically used as fuel, it is forced to use its fat stores instead, literally melting it off the body when it is in ketosis.

Ketosis makes the body burn stored and dietary fat for energy instead of getting its energy from the carbs you eat. Ketosis also turns fat into ketones in the liver that helps supply energy to the brain.

Q: Isn't low carb just another diet fad?

A: Absolutely not, it is a lifestyle change, and is not something intended as a temporary fix or a quick weight loss scheme.

There is a lot of scientific research evidence that has shown low carb eating to be highly effective for sustained weight loss and to provide other possible health benefits.

Q: What are the health benefits of a low carb diet?

A: Low carb eating results in weight loss, which can be very dramatic and very quick. Eating low carb eliminates those pesky out of control cravings, stabilizes blood sugar and consequently the appetite, and research has shown that reducing carbohydrate consumption and replacing them with protein and healthy fats results in reducing overall calorie consumption naturally and without starvation.

Needless to say, the side effects of this are quite impressive as obesity is linked to heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, cancer, reduced quality of life, belly fat, joint problems, autoimmune disease, and premature death.

Reduction in visceral fat - Research has shown that a low carb diet can help to reduce levels of visceral fat specifically rather than the superficial subcutaneous fat.

Stabilizes blood sugars to possibly prevent and manage type 1 and type 2 diabetes. Since low carb, eating eliminates insulin triggers, (sugars and starches) it is the diet of choice for those with prediabetes or those already diagnosed.

While a lot of research into low carb eating as it pertains to treating or preventing disease is far from conclusive, a low carb diet certainly results in weight loss and is especially important in regards to metabolic and insulin-related diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and other metabolic syndrome conditions.

Maintain healthy blood pressure

May lower risks for heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and stroke

The Ketogenic diet is used to treat several types of cancer and to slow the growth of tumors

The Ketogenic diet is also used to treat traumatic brain injury, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease and polycystic ovary syndrome

Eating less sugar and lowering insulin levels can help improve acne

Many people report simply feeling better, including feeling less bloated, and having more energy than when they a high carb diet.

Q: What can I eat on a low carb diet?

A: There are plenty of great choices, recipes, and combinations of low carb meals and foods.

- Turkey, chicken, red meat, ham, sausage, bacon, organ meat and exotic fowl
- Fish and seafood
- Eggs
- All non-starchy vegetables, including, leafy greens, onions, tomatoes, peppers, mushrooms, olives, etc.
- Butter, heavy cream, full fat sour cream and salad dressings (check labels for carb count)
- Whole full fat unprocessed cheeses, including, cheddar gouda, mozzarella, parmesan and blue cheese in moderation
- Almonds, walnuts, peanuts, nut butters, sunflower seeds, flaxseeds, pumpkin seeds, and chia seeds in moderation
- Extra virgin olive oil, coconut oil and avocado oil
- Avocados (whole or guacamole made from fresh whole avocados)
- Salt, herbs and spices
- No carb sauces like some hot sauce brands, and soy sauce, check labels.
- Berries in moderation
- Drinks: water, unsweetened tea, unsweetened coffee, club soda, no-calorie flavored seltzers, herbal tea without added barley or fruit sugars

Q: What carbs are not allowed?

A: Low carb diets, such as the Ketogenic diet allows the majority of carb intake to be limited to non-starchy vegetables, and small amounts of cheese and full fat dairy, like sour cream and heavy whipping cream.

No refined sugar, sweets, fruit, rice, pasta, bread, grains, starches, starchy vegetables, flour, and products made with it, or beans are allowed, especially initially in order to trigger ketosis.

Slow integration of some carb rich foods, like nuts, berries, and even beans can take place as you progress through the diet and reach your goals and how much and what carbs you can have depends on your individual weight loss progress and how those carbs effect it. Refined sugar is never allowed.

Q: How many carbs can I eat?

A: This really depends on the particular plan. The strictest recommendation is 20 grams or less, as is the case with the Ketogenic diet. Overall, 50 grams or less daily is recommended.

Additionally, physical activity matters, meaning the more active you are, the more carbs you can eat, but keep in mind the carb sources should still be vegetables, nuts, berries and possibly beans in moderation. If you are thrown out of ketosis or weight loss stalls, then carb intake will have to be altered.

Q: Do I have to count calories?

A: Low carb diets advocate eating to satisfaction, and there is no need to count calories. When you eliminate unhealthy carbs from your diet, you also get rid of out of control cravings, stabilize blood sugar and consequently the appetite, and research has shown that reducing carbohydrates and replacing them with protein and healthy fats results in reducing overall calorie consumption naturally and without starvation.

Many people report having to remember to eat by a clock because they simply do not feel out of control hunger as they did before cutting out carbs.

Q: How can it be healthy to cut out carbs from my diet? I want to lose some weight but cutting out something as important to our bodies as carbs scares me.

A: Remember that a low carb diet allows non-starchy vegetables, which are the healthiest carbs. It is the unhealthy carbs that are cut out, like refined sugar and sweets that do nothing but harm the body along with grains, like rice and pasta, which many experts believe we can live without.

This includes whole grains, which are not much different from sugar in their ability to release glucose and often have a higher glycemic index than sugary foods, which means they cause more of an insulin response in the body.

In fact, whole grains lack the nutrients or longevity of fats and proteins, and have been strongly associated with autoimmune diseases.

Another important factor is that you eliminate carbs, but increase intake of healthy fats. Fats tend to get a bad rap in the food chain when in fact some of them are actually very good for you. There are many essential nutrients we get from fatty foods such as avocado, meats, butter, cheese, coconut, and olive oils, not the least of which is energy and subsequent result of fat burning ketosis.

Many studies have shown that low carb diets are more effective in actual weight lost, decreasing risks for heart disease, improving metabolic health, and the lipid profile than low fat diets.

Q: How will my body run if I cut carbohydrates from my diet? Aren't carbohydrates what fuel us?

A: Yes, carbohydrates are a source of fuel for the body but they are not the only ones. As a matter of fact, evidence shows that our bodies are great adapters and that they actually run better when burning fat as opposed to burning carbs, a process known as ketosis.

Your body also has an almost endless supply of fat to burn as body fuel but only a limited supply of carb produced glycogen. Many people also don't realize that there is a natural process in the body that turns protein into glycogen body fuel called gluconeogenesis.

So not only will you get plenty of body fuel when lowering your carb intake, this is exactly what allows you to lose weight and turns your body into a fat burning machine.

Q: I have read that ketosis is extremely dangerous, is this fact or myth?

A: Ketosis is often confused with ketoacidosis. Ketosis is a perfectly harmless, helpful, and natural metabolic process, while ketoacidosis is a dangerous condition that happens in uncontrolled diabetes.

Q: Are there any side effects to cutting out carbs?

A: Some people experience digestion and diarrhea problems, but this common side effect typically goes away after about four weeks. Eating more high-fiber vegetables, like leafy greens and broccoli helps and magnesium supplements can alleviate constipation.

Q: Will I ever be able to eat carbs or sugar again?

A: When following the Ketogenic diet it is very important to be strict in the elimination of carbs initially, to allow the body to fully enter ketosis. As you reach your goals, be it weigh loss or reducing your type 2 diabetes A1C numbers you can indulge on occasion, but then return to the diet immediately.

Most ketogenic diets follow 3 phases that allow you to slowly integrate certain carbs back into your diet while tracking its effect on your weight, allowing you to reach your goal weight and maintain it by finding your ideal carb balance.

As with any healthy eating strategy, moderation is always key. Additionally, many people who sustain a low carb lifestyle for the long term find that when they do eat sugar or sugary foods they simply do not tolerate them or even enjoy them as they used to either because the taste is so strong and overwhelming or because they just simply feel better without it.

Q: Won't the high fat intake cause high cholesterol?

A: Evidence suggests the opposite is true. Low carb eating has an edge over low-fat diets for improving good HDL cholesterol levels as shown by this study done on the subject (but not the only one) and funded by the National Institutes of Health (published in the journal, Annals of Internal Medicine).

148 subjects participated with half following a low-carb diet, with a limit of no more than 40 grams a day. The other half ate a low-fat diet with no more than 30% of their calories coming from fat.

After 12 months the low carb group lost more weight and their cardiovascular risk factors improved. Their HDL cholesterol levels improved more than the low fat group.

The conclusion of the study was: "The low-carbohydrate diet was more effective for weight loss and cardiovascular risk factor reduction than the low-fat diet. Restricting carbohydrate may be an option for persons seeking to lose weight and reduce cardiovascular risk factors."

Several other studies have also shown low carb to be more effective than low fat in actual pounds lost and in reducing risk factors for heart disease.

Several other studies have also shown low carb to be more effective than low fat in actual pounds lost and in reducing risk factors for heart disease.

Q: I know I will miss carbs, and my old sugary favorites, what can I do?

A: Yes, of course, there is an adjustment period, and there may be struggles, but the truth is once you kick the sugar habit, your body and mind will adjust and you will be better for it.

There are many great health and meal replacement bars and shakes created by Atkins™ and other brands that have virtually zero net carbs and that really satisfy. Many of these mimic popular candy bars, but have no impact on your blood sugars, are high in protein, generally nutritious and do not interfere with ketosis. These products are very helpful in detoxing off carbs and making this new lifestyle a pleasant experience.

Q: I had a friend tell me they got dizzy, and had headaches with their low carb eating diet. Is this possible?

A: This can be a common occurrence and is caused by the kidneys excreting salt more rapidly as a result of ketosis, a process instigated by low carb eating where the body begins to use fat for energy instead of consumed carbs.

Since the body is getting rid of excess water and salt, since a low carb is natural diuretic, which is a good thing, it simply means you need to get more salt and drink more water. Extra salt intake also helps solve the problem of the kidneys compensating for loss of salt by releasing potassium, which is good for muscle mass.

To counteract this, drink 1 or 2 cups of clear broth every day to add about 1 or 2 grams of salt to your daily intake. Whole meats and green leafy vegetables are both also great sources of potassium.

Q: What if I feel tired and weak?

A: This can happen when you are not in full ketosis or your body is not using fats and ketones efficiently, lowering carb intake or taking MCT oil or ketone supplements can help.

Q: I like to have a couple of drinks to relax and unwind. Will I have to give up alcohol when eating low carb?

A: The body burns alcohol for fuel when alcohol is available, and this means that while it's burning the alcohol it will not burn fat. Therefore, it will not stop weight loss altogether, but will postpone it.

Because the body does not store pure alcohol as glycogen, it can immediately return to lipolysis once the alcohol is metabolized. In some people, alcohol can interfere with weight loss by increasing yeast-related symptoms. If this is not a problem then moderate consumption is okay.

It is important, however, to choose the right type of alcohol, meaning that you have to be careful that what you are drinking is not full of carbs or sugar. That means beer is definitely a no-no, as it is basically liquid bread and you cannot have sugar-filled cocktails, such as a Margaritas or Pina Coladas.

Stick with pure spirits like whiskey and vodka, which have zero carbs, and also wine, which has a low amount of carbs and practice moderation.

Keep in mind however that alcohol is really just empty calories, and if by chance, you are following a low carb diet and drinking alcohol and not losing weight you will need to stop drinking and see if that makes a difference.

Q: I just had a baby six months ago and I am struggling to take off the baby weight but I am currently breastfeeding. Is it ok to go on a low carb diet?

A: You can go on a low carb diet but you should do it on a limited basis.

Try a moderate low carb diet that consists of a carbohydrate intake of at least 50 grams a day or more.

Instead of restricting calories, eat more nutrient dense foods, like fresh lean meats and vegetables. Always ask your doctor before changing your diet while breastfeeding.

Q: Is it true that I should not eat egg yolks because they are not healthy?

A: There have been many negative things said about eggs over the years and their relationship to having high cholesterol levels in the body, but recently the official word has changed and most dietary recommendations include eggs as part of a healthy diet.

Over the years, many studies have suggested a non-existent relationship between egg yolks and increased bad cholesterol levels. That means there is no point to eating just the egg whites as part of your low carb eating.

Eggs are actually one of the healthiest foods you can eat because they are one of the foods that contain every amino acid group that your body needs, making them a perfect source of protein along with other nutrients.

Q: Are artificial sweeteners allowed and do they have ill effects on your long-term health?

A: Artificial sweeteners can interfere with ketosis, so it is recommended to limit their intake. Completely remove sweeteners like Aspartame, but if you need something sweet consider healthier sugar alcohols like xylitol or natural stevia that does not affect blood sugar levels like glucose and fructose.

Q: Is there a risk of muscle loss on low carb diets?

A: Many diets pose this risk, but the high protein and ketone levels help minimize this problem and it is always recommended to anyone to participate in regular muscle and strength training as part of an overall healthy lifestyle.

Q: I've heard low carb eating can cause urine to smell fruity? Is this true?

A: It happens, but it's not a problem, only the result of the excretion of byproducts created during ketosis.

Q: Is a low carb diet good for everyone?

A: Low carb diets are ideal for those who want to lose weight, are struggling with diabetes or have prediabetes and want to reduce risks for an actual diagnoses of type 2 diabetes, and also for those looking to improve their metabolic health. Of course, it will not work for everyone, and you should always ask your doctor before starting any new diet.

Bodybuilders, Athletes And Strength Trainers

Bodybuilders, athletes and those engaging in regular strength training or high intensity exercise can take advantage of these specific Keto plans.

- Cyclic Ketogenic Diet (CKD)

  The **Cyclic Ketogenic Diet** is designed with professional athletes and bodybuilders in mind. It is a strict regimen with carefully measured carb intake.

  It features periods of higher carb eating called refeeds, typically one time per week in order to supply the body with the muscle glycogen needed to perform well during high intensity workouts.

  The cyclic ketogenic diet supports intense workouts, bodybuilders and athletes by providing them with the carbs they need to perform, and is a strict regimen with carefully measured carb intake, well planned out depletion workouts along with strict adherence to very low carb eating for the rest of the week.

- The Targeted Keto Diet (TKD)

  Those who engage in regular strength training activity and want to follow the keto principles without completely eliminating carbs every day will benefit from the targeted Keto diet.

TKD is very similar to CKD except you will eat carbohydrates right before and right after weight training workouts. This allows the body to get energy required to lift at higher volumes and at higher intensities.

Those participating in high intensity sprinting will also want to use the TKD approach as this plan provides an adequate amount of carbohydrates required to produce optimal results.

TKD is a good option for those who are looking to gain mass but still maintain stable blood sugar levels since the intake of carbs occurs at a time they are least likely to turn into body fat. The extra carb intake makes this diet slightly more anabolic due to increased insulin levels, which is key for gaining muscle mass.

For lots of information about keto and exercising.

Note: You should always ask your doctor before starting this or any type of new diet.

Final Thoughts

Hopefully, these questions have helped clear up some of the common myths, rumors, and misconceptions about low carb eating so you can make an informed choice.

Stay well and take care!

For support, more tips and recipes visit our website at EssentialKeto.com or on Facebook.