

# Should I try a low carbohydrate diet to lose weight?

Low carbohydrate (carb) diets typically restrict the intake of carbohydrate-containing foods like breads, cereals, pasta, fruits, starchy vegetables, and milk products, as well as sugary foods like sugar, candy, syrups, jams and jellies. They also, tend to include larger amounts of protein and sometimes fat.

Not all low-carb diets are created equal—some encourage leaner meats and healthier fats, while others permit bacon, butter and other foods high in saturated fats. Some severely restrict carbohydrates, while others allow limited amounts.

Cutting carbs might help you lose weight in the short-term but it's mostly because you're eating less food and fewer calories. Research shows that the amount of weight lost on either low-carb or high-carb diets is the same when total calories are equal. That means that total calories are the most important factor in weight management.

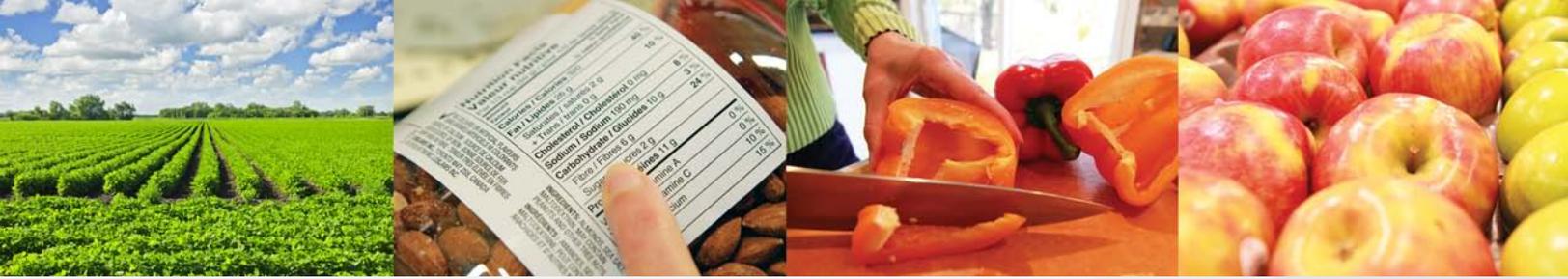
Many people find it difficult to stay on low-carb diets for long periods of time because food choices are so limited. They soon find themselves returning to their old eating habits. This can make these diets a poor choice for long-term weight loss.

Regardless of which diet approach you choose, permanent lifestyle changes in eating and physical activity are needed to prevent weight regain. The best weight loss plan is one you can stick with.

## What are the Down-sides of Following a Low carb Diet?

Drastically cutting carbs means you'll miss out on the nutritional benefits of healthy choices like whole grains, fruit, starchy vegetables, and legumes, We need the carbohydrates these foods provide us for several reasons, including:

- Our bodies need carbohydrate for energy and optimal brain function.
- Carbohydrate foods contain vitamins and minerals like iron, calcium, vitamin C, folic acid, potassium and magnesium. Strictly avoiding carbohydrates puts you at risk for nutrient deficiencies.
- Carbohydrates are an important source of fibre, which helps maintain blood sugar, reduces cholesterol, and supports good bowel function.



The long term health effects of low carbohydrate diets are not well known. More research is needed to determine if there are lasting health effects.

### Effective Weight Loss Tips

Research on people who have lost weight and maintained their weight loss shows that the following strategies can help take weight off and keep it off:

- Eat a healthy breakfast every day.
- Pay attention to portion sizes and total calories you are eating in a day.
- Enjoy a healthy diet that includes carbohydrate-rich foods like vegetables and fruits that are low in calories but high in fibre and nutrients. They'll fill you up and keep you from over-eating.
- Get moving and be physically active every day of the week. You'll burn calories and boost your energy.
- Be aware of your eating and activity habits. Track your food choices and your activity level in a journal or on-line tracker.
- Weigh yourself weekly.
- Go slow. Healthy weight loss is 1-2 pounds a week.
- Expect challenges. Weight loss is a process—it takes time, patience and effort.



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