

## Facts on Low Carb Diets

Generally, low carb diets restrict carbohydrate-containing foods found in grain products, some fruits and vegetables, legumes, milk products and foods with added sugar and include generous amounts of proteins and fats as found in beef, chicken, pork, eggs, and oils. Overall caloric intake on a low-carb diet is low.

Carbohydrates are sugars and starches that provide our bodies with energy, dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals. Carbs also play a role in keeping our blood sugar levels normal and keeping our digestive system healthy and regular, thus they are very important to our overall health. Carbohydrates are **NOT** fattening, and in fact health professionals encourage us to include more carbohydrate foods (whole grains, fruits, vegetables and legumes) in our diets to help achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Studies have shown that in short term use weight loss does occur on low carb diets; however most people cannot stay on them for long periods of time because of the restrictive nature of the diet, leading people to return to their old eating habits and thus gaining back the weight they lost initially.

***In addition and more importantly, long-term restriction of carbohydrate-containing food is not good for our overall health:***

- Our bodies use carbohydrates as the most effective source of energy
- Carbohydrates are sources of important vitamins and minerals such as iron, calcium, vitamin C, folic acid, magnesium & potassium. If you restrict carbs, then you put yourself at risk for vitamin and mineral deficiencies.
- Carbohydrates are also good sources of dietary fibre. Fibre has many health enhancing roles such as blood sugar control, cholesterol reduction and maintaining bowel health.

***Some health and nutritional concerns with low carbohydrate diets include:***

1. Increased risk of **Heart Disease**
2. Increased risk of **High Blood Pressure**
3. Increased risk of **Bone Mineral Loss**
4. Increased risk of **Gout**
5. Increased risk of **Kidney Stones**
6. Increased risk of **Constipation**

The recommendation from health professionals is to include high fibre carbohydrates in your diet, with moderate amounts of protein and healthy fats. The most successful means to weight loss is permanent changes to your lifestyle - following Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating and enjoying regular daily physically activity.