

Lose the Bulge—Not the Carbs

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Advocates claim that low carbohydrate intake will improve our body's insulin/blood sugar balance, thereby fostering weight loss. Although preliminary research has shown slightly more weight loss over the short term with lower carbs, long-term studies demonstrate otherwise.

A recent one-year randomized study compared many of the leading diets, including low-carb diets and the traditional low-fat diet. It was found that all the diets were similarly effective at reducing weight and lowering cardiovascular risk factors. The traditional low-fat diet was found to be the most practical; therefore compliance was best with this diet.

Critical for Weight Loss and Health

The majority of research in nutrition clearly demonstrates that carbohydrate-rich foods—specifically fruit, legumes, vegetables, and whole grains—reduce the risk of most chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease.

These foods are loaded with antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, healthy fats, healthy low-glycemic carbohydrates, and fibre. Together these compounds protect our bodies from disease and optimize metabolic rate. Diets that dramatically lower the intake of these valuable nutrients would also miss many health benefits. The long-term consequences of eliminating healthy carbohydrates could be catastrophic to nutritional health.

Further, carbohydrate-rich whole grains such as oat bran contain a soluble form of fibre that acts to stabilize blood sugar levels, reduce cholesterol in the blood, and curb appetite.

Dietary Supplements and the Bulge

Restricting calories often restricts the intake of essential nutrients. Inadequate intake of any nutrient could affect health and metabolic rate. A balanced one-a-day multivitamin and mineral supplement from a reputable company acts as an insurance policy to fill the nutrient gaps.

An essential fat supplement such as organic flaxseed oil would also be helpful, particularly when the intake of fat is overly restricted. Interestingly, fish oils have been found to support weight loss in obese individuals with hypertension due, possibly, to its stabilizing effects on blood sugar levels.

Current studies suggest that a higher intake of low-fat calcium-rich foods is associated with a lower prevalence of obesity. Although calcium supplements do not appear to benefit weight loss, a diet providing 900 to 1,100 mg of calcium from food is a good strategy.

Time-tested Strategies for Successful Weight Loss

Maintaining weight loss is the greatest challenge for most dieters. The National Weight Control Registry has compiled a list of strategies that have worked for dieters.

Accept Failure

Be easy on yourself. It takes time and patience to change your lifestyle; weight loss is never linear. Focus on the health benefits of these changes.

Allow Periodic Indulgence

It's okay to have some chocolate, chips, or ice cream periodically. Try healthier options such as 70-percent chocolate,

or certified organic chips baked with nonhydrogenated oil.

Frequently Monitor Your Weight

This gives you clues about whether you are on track so you can make modifications to your program. It also creates body awareness. Exercise for One Hour Daily Becoming active on a regular basis is critical. The key is to just get moving: go for a walk, play some tennis, or join a gym. Walk to the grocery store, or take the stairs at work. Every bit of activity helps.

Consume Five Small Meals per Day

Consuming three smaller meals with healthy snacks throughout the day will foster stable blood sugar levels, thereby controlling appetite and improving moods and metabolic rate.

Follow a Balanced Diet Rich in Healthy Carbohydrates and Low in Fat

This diet involves portion control, and moderate intake of fat. Emphasize whole grains, vegetables, legumes, fruit, lean meats, fish, poultry, and low-fat dairy.