

THE PLANT-BASED LIFESTYLE

The Dangers of the Keto Diet (and other low-carb diets)

The ketogenic diet (“keto”) is the latest in a long line of low-carbohydrate, higher-protein, high-fat diets. These diets - including Atkins, South Beach, paleo, primal, and keto - all promote moderate to high protein intake from animal sources and some level of carbohydrate reduction. The most severe of the carb reductions is the keto diet which advocates a high intake of fat and only 5% of calories from carbs. Without the glucose from carbs, the body extracts energy from fats consumed in the diet, which creates ketone bodies as a byproduct of metabolizing fats. No human population has survived in a perpetual state of “ketosis”. Side effects include: kidney stones, fatal cardiac arrhythmias, pancreatitis, higher cholesterol level among others. “A meta-analysis of four cohort studies following the diets, diseases, and deaths of more than a quarter million people found that those who eat lower-carb diets suffer a significantly higher risk of all-cause mortality, meaning they live, on average, significantly shorter lives.” (source:<https://nutritionfacts.org/topics/keto-diet/>).



Aren't Carbs Bad for You?

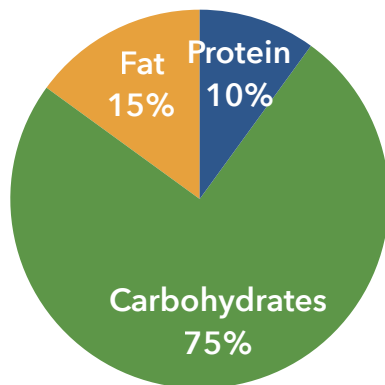
No! I want to shout it from the hilltops. Carbohydrates, commonly known as “carbs”, including whole grains, are the fuel your body runs on. Carbohydrates are converted to glucose during digestion and that glucose is the energy source for our muscles. Without glucose our muscles can't work. Without carbohydrates your body will begin to literally consume itself in order to make glucose. This is why the keto diet is so popular. Without the carbs in the diet the body begins to use up the fat stores in order to make glucose but it also will use protein - yes, protein taken from wherever it can get it - our muscles and bones particularly, to make glucose. In the short term, the keto dieter will lose weight, but there's a steep price to pay (see sidebar “The Dangers of the Keto Diet”).

Not only are carbohydrates essential for proper functioning of the



The ideal whole-food plant-based diet

The ideal whole-food plant-based (WFPB) diet is about 75% carbohydrates. Some sources, including Dr. T. Colin Campbell of the Center for Nutritional Studies advocate for a diet of 80% carbs. However this can be very difficult to achieve and so at Resolve Health and Fitness we advise the breakdown as follows:



Resources

Check out these resources if you want to learn more about carbohydrates:

- *The Starch Solution* by John McDougall, M.D.
- [What are Whole and Refined Grains.](#)
- Analysis of the [Latest Low-carb Fat Study.](#)

muscles, but are also essential to our brain, kidneys and heart function. Carbs are also essential for protein synthesis and proper digestive health. The longest living populations on earth eat a high-carb diet.

The Type of Carbohydrate Matters!

We must make a distinction here between complex carbohydrates found in plants and refined carbohydrates. Complex carbohydrates include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and contain many nutrients found only in plants such as phytochemical and fiber. Refined carbohydrates are made by a manufacturing process that strips out most or all of the starch, fiber, vitamins, minerals, phytochemical and often adds in fat in the form of trans fat. Refined carbohydrates are consistently associated with higher body weight and chronic disease whereas complex carbohydrates from plants are consistently associated with lower body weight and lack of disease. Here are some examples of each:



Complex Carbohydrates: whole fruits and vegetables such as apples, bananas, corn, broccoli along with whole grains such as oats, brown rice, millet, barley, and legumes such as kidney beans, black beans and lentils.



Refined Carbohydrates: cake, donuts, pastries, candy, potato chips, pretzels, white rice and most commercially produced breads and crackers.

It is simply not true that all carbohydrates induce weight gain. Says researcher, Linda Van Horn, PhD, of Northwestern University, "without exception, a high-complex-carbohydrate, high-vegetable-protein diet is associated with low body mass. High-protein diets were associated with higher body weight." This topic is so important that I will cover it in more depth in the next issue. Stay tuned.

If you want to know more, email alexandra@resolvehealthandfitness.com to learn about our whole-food plant-based education programs, consultations, and meal plans.