

# Low carb: healthy or just a trend?

Many of today's popular diets focus on eating very few carbs, while consuming lots of fat and protein. The keto diet is one example, but other diets, such as Atkins, offer similar weight loss plans.

These diets, like any diet plan, aren't a magic bullet for weight loss. In fact, they haven't been proven to work better than lower protein plans in long-term studies. If you do lose weight on the keto diet or a similar plan, you'll probably have to keep eating that way to keep the weight off. And, this may not be best for your long-term health.



## PROTEIN ISN'T PERFECT

Some diets have people believing that eating more protein is the answer to weight problems. But there's more to the story.

The type of protein you choose can have an impact on your health. High intake of meat isn't healthy, according to the American Heart Association. In fact, people who eat higher amounts of animal protein may be more likely to develop heart disease.

Plant-based proteins, however, may be a better choice. Foods like beans, legumes, soy, nuts and seeds offer protein and other nutrients. In fact, eating a mostly plant-based diet may slash your risk of heart disease by nearly half.

## KETOSIS CONFUSION

When you severely limit your carbs, your body starts burning fat instead. When this happens, the liver makes a product called ketones.

A small number of ketones are okay in people who don't have diabetes or other health issues. But sometimes, ketones can build up in the blood and high levels are dangerous. In severe cases, the ketones can get so high that they cause a coma or death. This is known as ketoacidosis.

People with diabetes may be more likely to get ketoacidosis with uncontrolled blood sugar. But, anyone who eats an extremely low carb diet could get ketoacidosis, though it's not very common.

## HEALTHY CARB CHOICES

Don't rule out carbs as a healthy choice. Foods like sweet potatoes, fruit, whole grains and beans offer many vitamins, minerals and fiber – along with some healthy carbs. These foods also contain antioxidants, which can help fight cancer.



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

When you focus on almost all protein and fat, you're missing out on a lot of nutrient-rich foods found in healthy carbs. While probably not harmful in the short-term, be sure to discuss whether you should follow a keto diet for longer periods with your doctor.