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Introduction

With the advances in technology and medicine that our world has seen in the past several decades, it's almost hard to grasp why we're continually getting unhealthier and more obese as time goes on.

But as with the introduction of anything new into a society, there are both good and bad sides to it.

Although we are able to battle and ward off medical conditions through scientific developments and improved technology, we're also living in a world of convenience. Drive-thrus, ordering food from our smart phones and computers and getting everything we want in a snap is also causing us to dig our own graves.

As our waistlines grow, so does the obesity rate.

While some countries have started to show a slight decline in both adult and childhood obesity, this problem is still very present. Documentaries and studies have been created and produced in an attempt to identify just what it is that is causing this health epidemic. While there may not be one perfect answer, one of the clear contributors to this problem is overconsumption of carbohydrates.

Now, before all you carb-lovers start cursing at your computer screen, listen up.

*Carbs are great- they're the main source of energy for the body and are essential for proper function. **But the large majority of obese individuals aren't eating the right carbs, and they're eating too many of them, period.***

If our world's population sat around consuming whole grain pastas and breads instead of Pop Tarts, it's safe to say we probably wouldn't be facing as large an epidemic as we are today.

The problem isn't carbs, it's the type of carbs and the quantity. Now with that said let us begin our journey into clarifying the Low Carb diet so we can make an informed decision whether or not to follow it.

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Chapter 1 – What The Heck Is Low Carb?

We often hear about low carb diets and how successful they prove to be in losing weight, but what the heck is a low Carb diet exactly?

The term "low-carb" means low in carbohydrate. Carbohydrates are usually found in foods like pasta, potatoes, fruit, bread and rice. A low carb diet does not entail any specific diet nor does it include well-defined steps to losing weight.

It is a rather loose term that varies according to the person who uses it. Some common features though, include consuming foods that are low in carbohydrate and glycemic. The consumption of carbohydrates leads the body to excrete insulin which is the body's function for energy.

*As carbohydrates get digested, glucose -the effect of insulin excretion- either gets burned by our body **if we need immediate energy** or else gets **stored as fat!***

More seriously, after consuming a meal that consists mainly of carbohydrates, the level of insulin in our body goes suddenly up and after a short time suddenly down. This effect causes us to be hungry only after 2 or 4 hours from our last meal, leading us to a vicious circle of being hungry, then eating and finally ending up storing the excess energy as fat.

The main ways to define a low carb diet, following the initial question "What Is A Low Carb Diet?", is to clarify whether you are talking about the actual carbohydrate that an adult consumes daily or about the percentage of the calories in a person's diet that comes from carbohydrates.

The usual amount of calories that are allowed in an adult's diet is about 50-60%. So any percentage of calories coming from carbohydrates that is below that, can be thought of as low carb.

For the carbs they do consume, the daily total intake is usually limited to anywhere from 60-130 grams, or 240-520 calories. When compared to governmental dietary guidelines, which

typically recommend consuming 225-325 grams of carbs per day, you can see how “low” a low-carb diet actually is.

When the amount of carbs you eat is reduced, theories say that your insulin levels will be better maintained as a result. How so?

When you eat carbs, especially simple carbs, your body breaks them down into sugars that hit your bloodstream. When your body experiences a sugar rush, it signals the release of insulin. Once insulin is released, glucose receives a cue to enter the cells in the body. Glucose is used first and foremost for energy, but when it's present in excess, it's stored to be used later or is turned into fat. By reducing the amount of sugars (carbs) you put into your body, your insulin levels have a better chance of being level and not experiencing spikes.

When reduced carbs happen over period of time it can lead to ketosis, a condition in which your body uses fat as energy instead of carbs. More commonly referred to as the Keto diet, this is low carb dieting on steroids!

This can cause serious fat loss and is the main reason why living a low carb lifestyle has been popular...

But is it safe? This is what we will be covering in the next chapter.

Chapter 2 – Is The Low Carb Diet Safe

Are low carb diets safe? Are low carb diets dangerous to your health? These are burning questions for dieters all over the world. The Low carb diet came in to existence as a solution for maintaining the calorie intake variable in precise levels. How it helps you to lose weight is simple logic. Once the caloric intake drops the body starts to make use of the stored fat to burn as energy, which then leads to weight loss. Of course it will lead to weight loss but will it be a safe process?

The answer is not a simple yes or a no. Even though the weight loss gurus emphasize the importance over and over again that it is perfectly safe long term, the nutritionists and the medical community bear a different opinion.

The established opinion is that no matter how effective the results are, unless cutting the carbohydrates are done at moderate levels the side effects will lead to disorders in bodily functions. Not only moderate but also it has to be properly chosen.

For example if you reduce the fat intake without paying attention to the type of fat it might even lead to elevated blood cholesterol levels.

You should gain adequate knowledge to determine what should be included and what shouldn't be. Here according to the example, a properly designed diet plan would have included polyunsaturated fats and mono-unsaturated fats which are considered safe.

Same theory applies to all the nutrients just like to fats. Some low carb diet plans even advise to refrain from fruits and vegetables. Such plans do more harm than good. A restriction on fruits like banana or watermelon that have a high glycaemic level might at least have logic to support it but bananas in turn are a great source of potassium. Limiting all the fruits and vegetables is a baseless advice that will deteriorate your health.

Reduced intake of calcium rich food likes could even cause serious conditions like osteoporosis. Women with calcium deficiencies tend to suffer from menstrual issues. Most low carb

diet plans focus more on protein intake. Unnecessary amounts of protein makes the kidneys work harder in order to remove the excess waste produced by proteins. Accumulation of harmful waste products might cause kidney stones.

Most importantly before selecting a diet plan one should understand his or her body well. A kidney patient should pay attention to the proteins while a heart patient should concentrate more on the fats. Likewise there are numerous factors that should be taken in to account before following a low carb diet.

Changes in your lifestyle will require changes in diet plans too. If you start working out or bodybuilding the energy demand of the body is different from what it used to be. Or if you get pregnant changes should come immediately. In cases like these consulting a professional is a must.

It is clear after reviewing the subject, that more, well-designed and controlled studies are required. There just isn't a lot of satisfactory information available, especially regarding long-range effects.

However we do know, extremely "low carb" diets might not be safe. But make them "correct carb" diets (which we will cover soon) and get the lean body you always dreamed while being in good health.

Now that we've covered if it is safe or not, we will turn our attention towards which low carb is best for you. As we are all individuals, so too low carb diets go under many guises and have lots of different variations to suit everybody.

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Chapter 3 – Which Low Carb Diet Is Right For Me?

Now that you know what low carb dieting is and whether it's safe, we must ask ourselves "Which one is actually for ME?"

There are many things that can qualify a diet to be low-carb. The most popular plans have a range of carb levels and food choices different from one another. Although they are different, all of them cut out most sugars, starches, and gluten.

By doing some research, you may find various diets; such as the Atkins diet, the No White Diet, or the South Beach Diet. All of these are great, but they also have different levels of difficulty to say the least.

The Atkins diet allows you to eat a lot of vegetables and then in later phases add in carbohydrates like fruits and whole grains. It's a harder diet at the beginning since you are pushed to eat lean

proteins more than fruits or the usual sandwich we are so used to. After the starting phases, you can add in more variety of foods, snacks, and carbohydrates. This would be a great diet for a stay at home mother, who might have more time to prepare the food and actually sit down and eat meals instead of grabbing the first thing that comes to hand in a grocery store.

The No White Diet, on the other hand, is great for everyone! Basically, you just stop eating anything that is white or that has white ingredients, which nowadays is easier to find. You get to eat healthier by cutting sugars, white flour (pasta, bread, cake, donuts, etc.), white rice, and white potatoes. This alone cuts back in the carbohydrate percentage of your diet, but is quite easy to accomplish. You learn to create healthier recipes and of course to eat healthier foods in the store. You now have the ability to buy whole wheat/gluten-free bread or sugar-free and whole-wheat muffins! You get to keep some amazing white foods in your diet though, such as tofu, cauliflower, and onions, which are low in carbohydrates and actually very good for you!

Now in saying these things about the 2 mentioned so far, there are 3 significant points I would like to emphasize:

1. The long-range success rate for low-carb and other types of diets is comparable.
2. Despite their acceptance, little data exists on the long-term efficacy and safeness of variations of the low-carbohydrate diets.
3. Rigorous low-carb diets are generally not sustainable as a routine way of eating. Boredom most often overcomes willpower.

Now, strict low-carb diets like the Keto diet, generate ketosis which is an unusual and potentially stressful metabolic state. This leads to very quick fat loss but under some circumstances this may cause health related complications.

The Low Carb diet you choose should be a blueprint for a lifetime of better eating, not just a hasty weight loss plan to reach your goal. If you can't see yourself eating the prescribed foods longer than a few days or a week, then chances are it's not the proper diet for you. To this end, following a somewhat low fat diet with a

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