

WITH DR. AIETA, N.D.

# LOW-CARB DIETS

As a naturopathic physician, part of what I do is to educate my patients about proper diet and nutrition. I am constantly asked what my take is on all the different diets out there, from low-fat diets to vegetarian to the most popular: the low-carbohydrate/high-protein diet.

I will usually individualize a diet plan for a patient based on his or her specific needs and medical conditions. For example, for a patient with type-2 diabetes, symptoms of low blood sugar or a family history of either, I would be more inclined to recommend a low-carbohydrate/high-protein diet for him or her.

Some patients are more prone to these types of blood-sugar conditions because of their genetic heritage. Studies have shown that people with a family history of these problems can put on up to three times more weight when consuming the same amount of sugar or refined carbohydrates as someone without that history. About 33 percent of the population has some degree of this sugar sensitivity, which means that low-carb diets may be a good choice for almost 90 million Americans.

In terms of weight management, this type of diet can be ideal for these people. Rarely do I recommend a vegetarian diet for these patients, because vegetarian diets tend to be much higher in carbohydrates and lower in fat and protein. In some cases, I have found it to make their health conditions much worse.

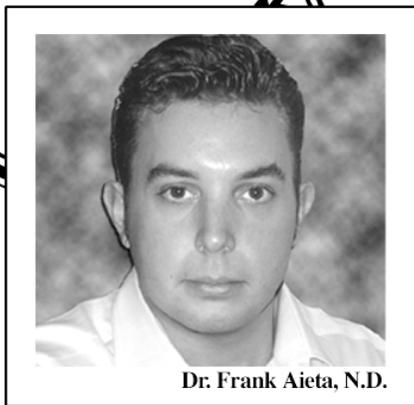
The basic premise behind a low-carb diet is to get the majority of your daily nutrition from protein and eat as little sugar and carbs as possible. Regardless of the type of diet that I put a patient on, total elimination of refined sugar and refined carbohydrates is essential, especially for someone on a low-carb diet. Refined sugars include fructose, sucrose, maltodextrin, high fructose corn syrup, and dextrose, so reading labels

is very important. Also, things like white bread and certain pastas are considered refined.

Conditions including obesity, insulin resistance, diabetes and heart disease are linked directly to over-consumption of refined carbohydrates by millions of people every day. Even things like fruit juice, which some people may consider a healthy alternative to soft drinks, are loaded with sugar, even if they are 100 percent real fruit juice. By removing the pulp and fiber from the fruit, it becomes a refined carbohydrate.

In terms of acceptable carbohydrates, I prefer patients consume more complex carbohydrates from vegetable sources. Whole grains and fresh whole fruits are preferred but should be consumed in moderation, because they can have a negative effect on blood sugar if eaten in excess. Nuts, seeds, beans, legumes and soy products are excellent sources of non-animal protein. In terms of animal protein, I recommend organic, free-range, grass-fed sources and non-farm-raised fish.

Whenever I place a patient on a low-carb/high-protein diet, there are certain nutritional supplements that are important to consider that may be limiting certain foods from his or her diet. I always recommend a good quality multivitamin or mineral. Extra calcium, magnesium and potassium may be needed, due to the limited amount obtained from a low-carb diet. I also recommend that they take a flavonoid supplement, because the patient may not be getting enough fruit from his or her diet. Herbs like hawthorne, grape-seed extract and green tea are all excellent sources. Flavonoids strengthen arteries, veins



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and connective tissue and reduce the risk of heart attack and certain cancers.

So, if you have blood sugar problems or a family history of diabetes and are having a hard time losing weight, try the low-carb approach. But remember to supplement with vitamins, minerals and flavonoids and stick with organic meats and fish.

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