

WHITE DOVE
BOOKS

*From Fat
to Flat*

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Contents

Statement of Rights	2
Disclaimer.....	3
Weight Loss, Carbs, and Evolution.....	6
What We Learn from Healthy Cultures.....	16
The First Low-Carb Diet	21
The Modern Low-Carb Diet	29
The Science Behind Low-Carb Diets.....	35
The Benefits of a Low Carb Diet.....	50

Weight Loss, Carbs, and Evolution

If you are struggling to lose weight, you are in good company; billions of people around the globe are fighting an uphill battle in the weight loss war as well. Yes, billions!

Studies show that two out of three Americans are overweight or obese. According to the World Health Organization, 1.6 BILLION people worldwide are overweight.

Interestingly, however, in some parts of the world, there are societies of people who stay trim and healthy well into old age and beyond. They are not plagued by many of the diseases that affect people in industrialized areas of the world, and they do not suffer many of the aging related

diseases that people in Western countries suffer as they age.

Scientists have studied the diets and lifestyle of these cultures, and diet is believed to play a hugely important role in their longevity and physical health.

Before we talk about the dietary selections made by these people, however, let us look at how our bodies developed over the course of millions of years of evolution, and why the current dietary choices that are available to us are contributing to the challenges we face when attempting to lose weight.

A large portion of the foods that are available today in grocery stores are presented to us in a form that was never available to our ancestors: refined

carbohydrates that have been stripped of any nutritional benefits.

The breads, cereals, cakes, rolls, muffins and donuts that are stacked on the grocery store shelves and piled high in display cases are made from refined flours. When this flour is processed, any health benefits that existed in the original grain is gone: these foods are all sugar and no fiber.

Our bodies did not evolve to consume foods like this.

The foods that were available to our ancestors were meat, fruits, nuts, tubers, and berries, and wild grains. Thousands of years ago it was healthy for our bodies to crave and to consume carbohydrates.

Carbohydrates are molecules found in fruits, nuts, grains and starch foods like potatoes and tubers. While carbohydrates are energy sources, it is also possible to get energy from protein.

Carbohydrates deliver energy much more quickly than protein, however, and the more refined and processed the carbohydrates are, the more quickly they deliver energy. White bread delivers energy more quickly than wheat bread; white sugar delivers energy more quickly than molasses.

This is not a healthy process because when energy levels shoot up quickly, they then crash just as quickly. So after eating refined carbohydrates like donuts or cake made with white flour and white sugar, first

you feel hyperactive and jittery, and then you feel tired, groggy, and irritable.

Our ancestor's bodies got energy and calories from the healthy carbohydrates that existed then. The carbohydrates in whole natural grains gave our species the energy that we needed to go out and hunt, to gather more food, to flee from predators, to reproduce, to survive.

The carbohydrates that are available to us today hardly bear any resemblance to those ancient natural grains. Today's carbohydrates are refined and mixed with processed sugar so that when we eat them, we are suffering all of the negative effects of carbohydrates and getting none of the benefits.

These modern refined carbohydrates are high in calories and they provide a quick jolt of energy, just like caffeine. This is followed by a crash that leaves us tired and dragging several hours later.

Do you frequently find that when you're at work, you run into an "energy wall" in the mid morning and mid afternoon? Do you find that at those times it is hard to think clearly and all that you want to do is curl up and take a nap?

This is a result of eating refined carbohydrates for breakfast and lunch. That donut or muffin or bagel which gave you a rush of energy right after you ate it is now causing your energy level to crash.

Eating refined carbohydrates causes your body to quickly produce insulin. The body

uses insulin to process the sugars that you have just consumed. The insulin then lowers your blood sugar, which causes feelings of fatigue and hunger.

The result is that after eating carbohydrates, you will find yourself hungry again and craving more carbohydrates several hours later.

Now, thousands of years ago it was healthy to crave carbohydrates because the complex carbohydrates that were available then provided a slow release of energy into our blood stream.

Unfortunately, our bodies have not evolved to adapt to the food choices that are available to us today. So these days, when we crave carbohydrates, we are craving food that is unhealthy for us.

When we crave refined carbohydrates like donuts, cake, white bread and pastries, we are also craving food that gives us sudden sharp rushes of energy followed by an energy crash, rather than food that gives us steady energy all day long. This should not be taken as a recommendation for cutting out all carbohydrates from our diet. Our bodies evolved to eat both meats and carbohydrates.

However, we did not evolve to eat refined carbohydrates, and science is showing us these days that they not only make us fat, they also make us sick, when eaten in large quantities.

The modern diet of refined carbohydrates has been associated with the rise in obesity and diabetes that is seen everywhere in the

industrialized world these days. There are a number of other dangerous diseases that are associated with a high carbohydrate diet as well.

A recent study done by researchers at the Case Western Reserve University and University Hospitals of Cleveland, in Ohio, found a link between high carbohydrate diets, obesity and esophageal cancer.

It is believed that part of the reason for this is because high carbohydrate diets lead to gastroesophageal reflux, which has been linked to higher rates of esophageal cancer.

A study of 1866 women in Mexico found that women who took in 57 percent of more of their calories in carbohydrates also had higher rates of breast cancer. In fact, their

breast cancer rates were 2.2 higher than those who took in lower percentages of their calories in carbohydrates.

So it makes sense to have carbohydrates make up a smaller percentage of your diet - and complex carbohydrates at that.

What We Learn from Healthy Cultures

Researchers have long been fascinated with the lifestyles of villagers in several areas of the world because of their exceptional longevity.

It is quite common for residents of Okinawa to live past 100 years old. They have very low rates of cancer, heart disease, diabetes and Alzheimer's disease, and many of the other aging related illnesses that plague residents of Western Nations.

Older people there also maintain high energy levels and it is not at all uncommon for people in their 90s to take martial arts classes, go to dances, and go on long walks every day.

This is also seen among residents of the Mediterranean. Residents there also routinely live to 100 years old and beyond, and remain trim and healthy well into their old age. And, like residents of Okinawa, they are free of many common age-related diseases.

Scientists who have studied the daily diets of residents of Okinawa and the Mediterranean have found that the healthy food consumed by these people gives clues to their longevity.

Refined carbohydrates are not on the menu in either one of these areas of the world. Grains in bread and noodles are complex - not overly processed - and they are not a major portion of the diet.

In Okinawa, healthy protein makes up a significant portion of the diet in the form of fatty fish such as salmon, and in tofu.

Fruits and vegetables, including seaweed are eaten several times a day.

Now, one could ask how much of the Okinawans healthy diet is due to good diet and how much of it is just a result of good genes. For a while it was believed that because the Okinawans are a fairly self-contained society living on an island, they may have just been fortunate enough to have evolved with healthier genes than most of the rest of the world.

However, as time went on it was discovered that this was not the case and that when Okinawans eat like Westerners

do, they gain weight and suffer health problems like Westerners do.

Recent studies have shown that Okinawans who moved away and began eating a more Western style diet are suffering from all of the same health problems that afflict people in industrialized countries, including obesity and heart disease and diabetes.

So clearly the impact of diet on health and weight cannot be discounted.

The Mediterranean diet also shares similarities with the Okinawan diet.

Although tofu is not on the menu in the Mediterranean region, healthy protein in the form of fish is consumed regularly. Lean beef is also popular there.

Carbohydrates are consumed in the form of leafy vegetables and fresh fruits rather than muffins and donuts and bagels.

The residents of Okinawa and the Mediterranean are living, healthy proof of the benefits of eschewing refined carbohydrates and concentrating on healthy proteins and healthy complex carbohydrates such as green vegetables and whole wheat.

The First Low-Carb Diet

Dr. Atkins is widely thought of as the modern creator of the low carbohydrate diet, but in fact, another man discovered, tested, and then recommended his own version of this diet many years earlier.

William Banting, a carpenter and undertaker to the wealthy, wrote a book called “Letter on Corpulence Addressed To The Public”, which was first published in London in 1863. In that book, Banting talked about how he grew increasingly heavy as he got older, finally reaching a weight of 202 pounds when he was in his early 60s.

Banting, only 5’5” described how his joints constantly ached and he struggled for breath when climbing up and down stairs.

It was nearly impossible for him to tie or untie his shoes, he reported.

Banting spoke of his many, frustrating attempts at losing weight - attempts that dieters today can emphasize with. On the advice of a physician, he took up rowing, only to find that it increased his appetite so much that he ended up gaining rather than losing weight.

He tried going to the Turkish baths that were popular at the time, to sweat off the weight, and found that he lost a few pounds each time but then promptly gained it back.

A big part of his problem was the lack of scientific knowledge of diet that prevailed at the time.

People simply had no idea of what to eat. Calories and ketones were unheard of in that day. As a result, they turned to fad diets such as drinking vinegar, which Lord Byron swore by as a weight loss method.

Banting, not knowing any better, lived mostly off of “bread, butter, milk, sugar, beer, and potatoes, which had been the main (and, I thought, innocent) elements of my subsistence,” he said in his now-famous “Letter”.

Not surprisingly, by eating that diet he gained more and more weight over the years and could not seem to find any solution. He consulted doctor after doctor until he finally found one who had Banting describe to him what he was currently eating.

His new physician told him that his diet contained “starch and saccharine matter” and was making him fat. He prescribed a new, meat-based diet for Banting.

Banting followed his new doctor’s advice and went on a diet with very little starch or sugar and no beer. He started out each day by eating six or eight ounces of meat, tea and coffee without milk and sugar, and one slice of dry toast for breakfast.

His meals throughout the day were similar, mostly protein, vegetables (but no potatoes), with a little fruit, and with most alcohol prohibited.

- For “dinner”, at 2 p.m., he had five or six ounces of fish, vegetables, an ounce of dry toast, and “fruit out of a pudding not sweetened”.

- For tea, at 6 p.m., he had two or three ounces of cooked fruit, “a rusk or two,” and a cup of tea.
- For supper, at 9 p.m., he had three or four ounces of meat or fish, and a glass or two of claret or sherry.

“Perhaps I do not wholly escape starchy or saccharine matter, but scrupulously avoid those beans, such as milk, sugar, beer, butter, etc., which are known to contain them,” he said.

In his book, Banting described how as soon as he started following the new regimen, he slept more soundly and woke up feeling refreshed.

He quickly felt healthier and more energetic, and within a few months shed 50

pounds. Numerous other ailments that he had been suffering, including an “umbilical rupture”, vanished along with the weight, and he described himself as feeling healthier and more vigorous than he had since he was a young man.

The book was a sensation, even though Banting was a carpenter, not a medical professional. He printed the book at his own expense and went through two printings of the book for free, because he wanted to provide people with a solution to the obesity that he himself had struggled with for so long.

He then went on to sell 63,000 copies and the book was translated into French and shipped to America. He charged a shilling per copy.

The word “banting” actually entered the English language as a verb. Well into the 20th century, when people were dieting, they said they were “banting” as a slang term, especially in England.

The diet was controversial not only because Banting wasn't a doctor, but because it did not call for any reduction in fat. It did not recommend trimming of fat from the meat, and it did not call for draining fat away during cooking. This went against the established beliefs of the time. And it was one of the first times that the mysterious calorie-burning benefits of a high protein, low carbohydrate diet were established.

Despite the controversy, people who were desperate for a weight loss solution tried

the unique new diet plan - and found that it worked .

Of course, at the time, there was very little science behind the diet; doctors simply proposed theories without any real knowledge behind those theories.

However, simple observation made it clear to Banting's physician that eating bread and sugary foods and drinking beer seemed to cause people to gain weight, so he proposed a diet that seemed logical.

And fortunately for Banting, the diet worked.

The Modern Low-Carb Diet

Fast forward to the 20th century. People were, of course, still struggling to lose weight. They turned to low fat diets; they starved themselves, they tried grapefruit diets...and found little success.

Dr. Robert Atkins, an overweight cardiologist, was struggling to slim down and had unsuccessfully tried several diets. He decided to try a carbohydrate restricted diet, based on advice that he read in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

The diet was so successful that Atkins, like Banting a century before him, began recommending it to those patients of his who were overweight. When he saw how well the diet worked for them, was inspired

to write a book based on the high protein low carbohydrate theory.

His book, the Atkins New Diet Revolution, was first published in 1972. It was an absolute sensation, selling tens of millions of copies.

Dr. Atkins advocated going through several phases on his diet. He started out with severe restrictions on even healthy vegetables and fruits, but allowed meat, cheese, butter, milk, and cream.

In the first phase of the diet, which he called “induction”, he had a long list of forbidden foods. He instructed people to eat no fruits, breads, pasta, potatoes, or nuts or seeds. Foods that combined protein and carbohydrates, such as kidney beans, were forbidden at that phase of the diet.

Foods like cake and cookies were completely banned. Sugar was not allowed, but sugar substitutes, especially those containing sucralose, were permitted on his diet.

Dr. Atkins recommended no more than 20 grams of carbohydrates a day, much of which was supposed to come from green leafy vegetables.

To put that in perspective, one slice of bread generally has about 15 grams of carbohydrates, a cup of pasta has about 32 grams, a cup of milk has 15 grams of carbohydrates, a slice of pizza has 30 to 50 grams of carbohydrates, and a brownie has about 35 to 50 grams depending on size.

But Dr. Atkins diet was not about deprivation. In fact, there were plenty of

foods that were forbidden on traditional diets, which were recommended on Dr. Atkins' diet.

Dr. Atkins didn't just permit eating fat, he recommended it. His diet very specifically called for eating liberal portions of fats and meats, including red meats. Butter, mayonnaise, olive oil, and other vegetable oils were encouraged on his diet regimen.

Because Atkins was a doctor, his book was taken considerably more seriously than Banting's book was in its day. As more and more people tried his diet and lost weight without feeling hungry, the book's popularity soared and "The Atkins Diet" became a household name.

This is not to say that there was no controversy or criticism from some

traditionalists who openly scorned or questioned the book, and the whole idea of being able to lose weight using the Atkins method.

There was plenty! The Atkins diet seemed to defy common sense because unlike traditional diets it did not call for the counting of calories or the restriction of fatty foods. And yet, as Banting discovered a century earlier, it worked.

According to Dr. Atkins, one of the main reasons that the diet worked so well was because people were not hungry when they consumed enough protein and fat.

Therefore, they were likely to stay on the diet and not cheat, because they were not constantly plagued by hunger pangs. They

were full and satisfied while following his diet.

However, there's more to the high protein low carbohydrate diet than that. Next, we go into the science behind the Dr. Atkins diet, and other high protein low carbohydrate diets such as the Scarsdale Diet and the Banting diet, and why they actually work where other low calorie diets fail.

The Science Behind Low-Carb Diets

When Dr. Atkins' diet first became popular there were many critics who insisted that his claims were impossible and his diet could not possibly work.

His diet literally violated the laws of physics, many scientists and physicians said. People cannot eat a high calorie diet and lose weight, because calories must go somewhere. Calories do not just disappear. When excess calories are consumed, they are converted into body fat. That was what conventional wisdom, and science, up to that point, portrayed as the truth.

That was why low calorie diets were so widely recommended, by doctors, by the United States Government department of

health. But it also was clear that they weren't working. People on low calorie diets weren't losing very much weight.

There was so much controversy over the concept of a high protein, low carb diet that a number of studies were done on the subjects. To the surprise of critics, Atkins' claims proved to be true; high protein, low carb diets did actually work better than low calorie and low fat diets.

One of these was a study that compared high protein low carb diets with traditional low calorie low fat diets. The study was carried out by Penelope Greene of the Harvard School of Public Health, and the results were presented at a meeting of the American Association for the Study of Obesity.

Green found that people eating an extra 300 calories a day on a very low carb regimen lost more weight during a 12-week study than people who were on a typical low fat diet.

The study was in fact funded by the Atkins Organization, but the Atkins Organization had no input into how the study was carried out and they did not get to design or supervise the study.

Participants were broken up into three groups, a low carb group and a low fat group - and a low carb group that ate 300 extra calories a day.

The amount of calories, carbs, and protein consumed by each group was very carefully controlled.

Each group was given all of their meals and snacks and told not to eat anything else. The meals were prepared by a local restaurant and were very carefully measured out and calorie counted.

The low-carb meals consisted of only five percent carbohydrates, fifteen percent protein and sixty-five percent fat.

The other people in the study received meals that were fifty-five percent carbohydrate, fifteen percent protein and thirty percent fat.

All three groups of people lost weight over the course of the 12 week study. The people who were on the lower calorie and lower carbohydrate diet lost an average of 23 pounds, while people who consumed the same amount of calories on the lower

fat, higher carbohydrate diet lost an average of 17 pounds.

Here was the amazing thing that came out of this study. The volunteers who ate the extra 300 calories a day of low-carb food lost an average of 20 pounds.

They were eating 300 calories MORE per day than people who ate the low-fat diet - and they lost MORE weight!

This is proof positive that the high protein diet is actually more effective than a typical low-fat diet.

Another study followed four different groups of overweight women who followed four different diets: the Atkins Diet, the Zone Diet (which is also a low carbohydrate diet), the Lifestyles, Exercise, Attitudes,

Relationships and Nutrition (LEARN) diet which calls for low fat but higher carbohydrates, and the Ornish diet, which is high in carbohydrates but recommends very little fat.

The women who followed the Atkins diet lost the most weight - 4.7 kilograms or 10.3 pounds. The women who followed the LEARN diet lost 2.5 kilograms or 5.5 pounds, the women who followed the Ornish diet lost 2.1 kilograms or 4.6 pounds and the women on the Zone diet lost 1.6 kilograms or 3.5 pounds. This was over a course of 10 weeks.

Out of all of them, the Atkins diet was the one highest in protein and lowest in carbohydrates.

Study after study seems to indicate that the high protein, very low carb diet is the most effective at helping people shed pounds quickly, without constant feelings of hunger and deprivation.

Dr. Atkins and other doctors and scientists have explained why eating protein is actually a better way to lose weight than eating carbohydrates.

It all has to do with how the human body breaks down food and converts it into energy and fat.

Carbohydrates are simple molecules. The body does not have to work very hard to break down carbohydrates. Therefore, the body does not have to burn up very much energy in order to break down carbohydrates.

Carbohydrates are processed very efficiently by the body. And since it is so easy to break down carbohydrates into energy, the body doesn't burn very many calories in the process.

Also, the body processes refined carbohydrates so quickly that the fuel is used up almost immediately and that leaves people hungry shortly after they've eaten.

Fat and protein are a different story, according to Dr. Atkins and other science professionals who support his theories.

When the body is deprived of carbohydrates, it must find another source of energy to keep the body running.

The ideal situation would be if the body burned fat, not muscle, right? It is healthy for our body to have plenty of muscle. We need muscle; Our hearts are made of muscle. Also, each pound of muscle that we have burns more calories than each pound of fat - so the more muscular we are, the more calories we burn and therefore the more we are able to eat while still maintaining a healthy weight.

For each pound of muscle on our bodies, we burn an additional 30 to 50 calories per day. Ten extra pounds of muscle on our body would burn an additional 300 to 500 calories a day.

When people follow typical low-fat low-calorie diets which do not have enough protein, their bodies desperately search for

additional energy and start burning muscle, because they have no protein available to burn.

The body is basically forced to cannibalize itself and devour vital muscle. This is physically unhealthy and also, over time, means that the dieter will have to eat less and less to maintain their body weight. It's a set up for weight gain.

However, when people go on high protein low carbohydrate diets like the Atkins or Scarsdale diet, here is what happens:

- The body needs energy. It isn't getting it from refined carbohydrates and it's barely taking in any carbohydrates at all.
- The body is taking in plenty of protein on this type of diet, so it isn't forced to turn to

the body's own stores of muscles for energy.

- So, instead, the body starts raiding the fat stores and burning fat! This is exactly what we want - less fat, more muscle.

At this point the body has entered state that you may have heard about - the state of ketosis. What this means is that the body is breaking down fat for energy and generating molecules called ketones.

Ketones are carbon fragments produced by the liver as a by-product when fat is broken down for energy. The ketones serve as an energy source to replace glucose in the bloodstream which is produced by carbohydrates and which would usually be used as energy.

When people first start high protein, low carbohydrate diets and enter into a state of ketosis, they often report a mildly euphoric feeling. Ketosis also has a dampening effect on the appetite, causing people to eat less and feel fuller.

This is another benefit of a high protein diet; people who eat protein report feeling fuller more quickly than people eating carbohydrates, and since ketosis also has an appetite suppressing effect, it is much easier for people on high protein diets not to go off their diet and binge.

Is Ketosis dangerous, however? The problem that some people experience with high protein diets is not ketosis, it is ketoacidosis. People who have diabetes or

are pre-diabetic - and may not know it - are especially vulnerable to this condition.

This condition happens when dangerously high levels of ketones build up in the blood. Symptoms include extreme thirst, frequent need to urinate, high blood sugar levels, feeling exhausted, nausea, shortness of breath, and a fruity odour on the breath.

People who are suffering from ketoacidosis generally need to be hospitalised. Ignoring the warning signs of ketoacidosis can cause people to lapse into a coma.

This is not a condition that is experienced by the vast majority of people on high protein low carbohydrate diets - otherwise the Atkins book and other high protein low carb diet books would have been pulled off of bookstore shelves long ago.

For people following a typical high protein diet, ketoacidosis is not going to be an issue. There have been a few recorded cases of ketoacidosis associated with the diet, but the people in those cases generally had an underlying health condition that they were unaware of before they started the diet.

Because of the potential risk associated with *any change of diet*, it is, of course, important to get the go-ahead from your doctor or physician before making such a change.

If you have any concerns about possible side effects, you should definitely mention that to your family physician while discussing the risks and benefits of

whatever type of diet that he or she recommends for you.

The Benefits of a Low Carb Diet

Besides the benefit of sustained weight loss, here are some of the most commonly reported benefits of a low carb diet:

- Increased levels of energy
- Cravings for sweet food gone or Dramatically reduced
- Better ability for mental concentration
- Improved mood – less mood-swing
- Emotionally more stable
- Comfort-eating and binge-eating completely gone
- Better dental hygiene (less plaque; gums healthier)

People sometimes also report the following benefits:

- Reduced pain in joints or muscles
- A reduction in headaches
- PMS (PMT) symptoms improved
- Less heartburn
- General improvements in the skin

The weight loss benefits of a low carb diet include:

- More rapid weight loss than low-fat diet programs.
- Better weight control
- Reduced hunger and
- Fewer appetite swings

- Extra fat-burning
- Raised metabolic rate

Overall, the continuing popularity of a high protein low carb diet shows that it generally provides a safe, healthy weight loss method when followed correctly. And it has been proven by many scientific studies to provide a more efficient method of weight loss than traditional low-calorie diets.

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Will Edwards is the founder of [White Dove Books](#) - the internet's leading website for Self-Improvement and Personal Development. A graduate of the University of Birmingham, he develops and teaches Personal Development workshops and is a published author.

Within its first three years, White Dove Books was recognised as one of the internet's leading sites for self-help and personal development; breaking into the top 100,000 sites on the internet at the end of 2005.

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