

# Carb Wars

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## **LOW-CARB DIETS:**

Paleo: (also called the caveman diet or stone-age diet) is based on foods presumed to be available to Paleolithic humans. It includes vegetables, fruits, nuts, roots, meat, and organ meats - with no dairy products, grains, sugar, legumes, processed oils, salt, and alcohol or coffee. This diet is generally low-carbohydrate, high-protein.

Why do we want to try to eat like our paleolithic ancestors, when our bodies and our lives and our availability of food sources has evolved so much since then? When we have the choice to do things better now, why wouldn't we evolve?

Paleo proponents often talk about the enzyme-inhibiting compounds in grains, beans and legumes as arguments against eating them. But those compounds are easily neutralized through soaking, sprouting, and/or cooking.

Atkins: a low-carbohydrate, high-fat diet promoted by Robert Atkins, who suggested that starchy carbohydrates are the root cause of weight gain by putting the body in a state of "hyperinsulinism" - which is a term Atkins coined that many doctors feel is the same as Type 2 diabetes.

Atkins has been fully and completely refuted by doctors and scientific studies, so we should really just let this fad diet be put to rest. Most doctors disagree with the underlying theory of the diet, and it was not shown to have any significant effect on long-term weight loss in studies.

## **HIGH-CARB DIETS:**

Starchitarian: This is a diet promoted by Dr John McDougall, which revolves around the concept of eating more "Resistant Starches". Resistant starches are ones that our digestive systems can't break down. Resistant starch is found in peas, beans and other legumes, green bananas, and also in cooked and cooled starchy products like sushi rice and pasta salad.

(I also use the term starchitarian in a more unofficial way, to describe someone who goes vegan by cutting out meat, but doesn't rebalance their diet with more protein-rich plant foods, and just relies on starchy foods (potatoes, rice, pasta, bread) for sustenance.)

Fruitarian: a diet that consists entirely or primarily of fruits in the botanical sense, and possibly nuts and seeds, without animal products. Fruitarianism is a much more restrictive subset of veganism.

In general, low-carbohydrate diets can create issues with energy levels, to both your body and your brain, meaning you would operate at less-than-optimal performance. There's a reason that endurance athletes are more likely to go with a high-carb than a low-carb diet - our bodies need it as fuel.

Starchitarians and fruitarians tend to not eat much fat or protein, both of which are important to many of the functions of your body. There isn't usually enough fat for full vitamin and mineral absorption or to maintain hormone balance, and many women need more fat in their diet to make sure their menstrual cycle and reproductive system is healthy.

## **BALANCE. QUALITY. NOT LOW-CARB. NOT HIGH-CARB.**

Studies have shown that the range of carbohydrates in our diets is optimized for most people at 55-70% of total calories. People may vary somewhat within that range, but the range is pretty big, and is done so that 97.5% of people will find their optimum balance within it.

One of the biggest factors is the quality of the foods in question. Things like white bread are high-carb, and pretty much empty calories (have no real nutrients), so good to reduce or eliminate them. If you compare that to some cooked quinoa or buckwheat, which have a high level of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, fiber, and water content along with the carbohydrates, it's a totally different story. They should be part of an overall balanced and healthy diet for energy and nutrition.

## **SWEETENERS**

Opt for fruit, stevia, unrefined cane sugar (Sucanat), coconut sugar, molasses, maple syrup.

Avoid white sugar, but also agave nectar and artificial sweeteners like splenda or nutrasweet