

## What You Need to Know About the Atkins Diet

The Atkins diet promotes eating foods high in protein and low in carbohydrate. Is it a long term healthy way to eat? Consider these concerns:

- **There is not enough variety in this diet.**  
You need a variety of foods each day to get all the nutrients your body needs. The Atkins diet suggests you limit certain foods like fruits, vegetables and carbohydrates. In fact, you are encouraged to take a pill so that you get all of the nutrients you need. This diet, because it is low in fruits, vegetables and grains, is low in fiber. Need another reason to continue eating enough fruits and vegetables in your diet? They contain phytochemicals—substances which may ward off heart disease and cancer.
- **High (animal) protein is high fat.**  
The high protein part of this diet means you will be getting more fat in your diet than recommended. This may increase your chance of getting heart disease and some cancers.
- **A diet high in protein puts a strain on your kidneys.**  
These diets are not for those with kidney damage nor for women who are pregnant or nursing. And for others the high protein can stress your kidneys.
- **You lose calcium and put your bones in danger.**  
Too much animal protein may cause your bones to lose calcium. This can weaken your bones. The Atkins Diet limits milk, an excellent source of calcium.
- **Can you afford to follow this diet?**  
Foods like lobster and veal are recommended as protein sources - these are not low cost foods! Unfortunately, foods like bread and pasta that are low cost are restricted. And taking a vitamin and mineral pill, as the diet suggests, is an extra expense.
- **Why do these diets seem to work?**  
They are low in calorie. A low calorie diet will help you lose weight. There is also quick weight loss early on. This weight loss is water, not fat.  
Dr. Atkins says he has worked with over 25,000 patients but he cites no studies. Instead, he relies on individual "success" stories.

### **The bottom line?**

Any diet that is high in protein and low in carbohydrates is not a healthy eating plan for life.

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