

# Stay Out of Zone – How to be Thin AND Healthy by John McDougall, M.D.

## **High Protein Diets – Fads & Fiction:**

One of the most popular versions of the fad diet today is the high-protein diet. I'm sure you all know somebody on a high-protein diet who's lost 20 pounds in 30 days eating all the bacon, butter and bleu cheese dressing s/he wants. There's just one hitch – something the authors of these diets won't tell you about: If you're trying to lose weight on a high-protein diet, you're risking your health.

**Wrong by Design:** We are designed to run on carbohydrates. Glucose, one of the simplest, most basic carbohydrates, is our primary fuel. By our very design, the body needs carbohydrates to operate efficiently. Brain tissues, red blood cells and cells of the kidneys will ONLY use glucose as fuel.

**Making yourself sick to lose weight:** When you take the carbohydrates away, your body runs out of glucose and is forced to burn its secondary fuel – fat. When your cells burn fat instead of glucose, byproducts known as “ketones” are produced, creating a state called “ketosis,” which leads to a loss in appetite and significant water loss...and also to fatigue, nausea and low blood pressure. The severely carbohydrate-restricted diets simulate the metabolic state seen with serious illness. In short, they're “make yourself sick” diets.

**Staying sick forever:** In order to remain in ketosis, you must severely restrict carbohydrates. More than 80 calories of carbohydrate (a half of a potato or a banana) could take you out of ketosis and cause you to become hungry again. In order to maintain weight loss from a high-protein diet, most people must remain in this state of sickness on a long-term basis.

**Flirting with heart disease and cancer:** Low-carbohydrate, high-protein diets contain significant amounts of the very foods the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association tell us

contribute to our most common diseases. A 1980 study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* that tracked the effect of the diet described in Dr. Atkins' *Diet Revolution* showed a significant increase in the amount of LDL “bad” cholesterol among participants, and in women a significant decrease in the amount of HDL “good” cholesterol, suggesting an increased risk of heart attacks.<sup>1</sup> There was also a significant increase in free fatty acids, which may increase the chance of developing heart beat irregularities.<sup>2</sup>

**Washing your bones into the toilet:** Osteoporosis and kidney stones are caused primarily by a diet rich in animal foods. A high-protein diet provides an abundance of acid that must be neutralized. The body uses its bones as a buffering system. This causes bone loss, which leads to osteoporosis.<sup>3</sup> During its passage through the ureters, this bone material can solidify into kidney stones.<sup>4</sup>

**Sharp as a tack? Not anymore!:** Another immediate effect you may notice on a high-protein diet is reduced mental capacity. A recent study shows that mental functioning is impaired by ketosis.<sup>5</sup>

**Another side effect -- Constipation:** If you do choose to try a high-protein diet, make sure you have plenty of laxatives on hand. High-protein diets cause constipation because they are composed chiefly of foods (meat, fish and cheese) that are completely free of dietary fiber. Low-fiber diets are also believed to cause varicose veins, hemorrhoids and hiatal hernia.

**Draining your body of its most important element:** Carbohydrate-deficient diets cause dehydration. In fact, this is the main reason that the initial weight loss for people on these diets is so rapid.

**Break out the breath mints:** Keith Ayoob, professor of nutrition at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in

New York City, warns about the bad breath caused by the high-protein diets. This unpleasant side effect is caused by the ketones produced when your body is forced to burn fat. Although halitosis isn't physically damaging to you, it could seriously damage your social or business life.

**The truth: Complex carbohydrates are the secret to health AND weight loss:** A low-fat diet based on complex carbohydrates with the addition of fruits and vegetables will cause effortless, permanent weight loss without hunger, while promoting good health. You can eat delicious dishes, such as minestrone soup, chili, and bean burritos. You won't ever have to make yourself sick again with fried cheese cubes wrapped in bacon. And it's a program you can stick to – for the rest of your new, healthy, and long vital life!

1. JADA 77:265, 1980
2. Lancet 343:155, 1994
3. J Nutr 128:1051, 1998;
4. J Pediatr 117:743, 1990
5. Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord 19:811, 1995

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*This pamphlet is condensed from an article appearing in the Winter, 2000, edition of EarthSave's news magazine "Healthy People Healthy Planet." You can read the entire article, including references, on-line at [www.earthsave.org/news/hiprotein.htm](http://www.earthsave.org/news/hiprotein.htm). To request a copy of the news magazine, call EarthSave at 1-800-362-3648 or email us at [information@earthsave.org](mailto:information@earthsave.org).*

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## Tips for Healthy Weight Loss

## The Power To Make A Difference Is On Your Plate

## Dying To Lose Weight?

### How to lose weight the healthy and natural way:

?? **Eat a diet rich in unrefined complex carbohydrates**, such as whole grains (bread, rice, pasta, cereals, etc.), starchy vegetables (potatoes, sweet potatoes, etc.) and legumes (beans, split peas, lentils, etc.).

?? **Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.** Fresh is best, but frozen is good too!

?? **Avoid fats and oils**, including so-called “good” oils.

?? **Avoid animal products**, including meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, dairy products and eggs.

?? **Avoid or limit refined carbohydrates**, such as white flour, refined white rice and sugar.

?? **Avoid or limit alcohol.** Who needs the extra calories, not to mention the burden alcohol places on the body?

?? **Be a label reader!** Many unhealthy ingredients, including chemical additives, fats, animal products, excessive salt and excessive sugar can lurk in packaged, processed foods.

?? **Exercise regularly.** Find something you enjoy doing and stick with it. You don't need to join an aerobics class...walking is great exercise, and costs you nothing!

?? **Work with your doctor.** If you are seriously overweight, if you are pregnant or nursing a baby, or if you suffer from serious or chronic illness, particularly that for which you take medication, always consult with your doctor before making any major change in your diet and exercise habits.

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## What's Wrong with High-Protein Diets?

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**Protect yourself from chronic diseases.**

**Plant foods supply the nutrients necessary to promote good health**



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Educational Series**

EarthSave promotes food choices that are healthy for people and for the planet. We educate, inspire and empower people to shift toward a plant-based diet, and to take compassionate action for all life on Earth.