



# CALORIES DO COUNT-

## Whether Low-fat or Low-carbohydrate

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Overweight or obesity represents an imbalance between energy consumed and energy expended as physical activity. Currently 64 percent of all adult Americans are either overweight or obese. About 30 percent of all children, ages 6-19, are either at-risk for overweight or overweight. Overweight and obesity increase the risk for developing chronic diseases such as diabetes (type 2) and heart disease.

### Low-fat Diets?

- **Low-fat diets may reduce feeling full or satisfied after a meal.**

Fat is a very concentrated source of calories with more than twice as many calories per gram compared to either carbohydrate or protein. If you can reduce the amount of fat in your diet, without increasing the carbohydrate or protein, then there will be a reduction in caloric intake. Low-fat diets often result in weight loss but many people cannot maintain the diets over an extended period of time because of never feeling full or satisfied.

*(Brinkworth GD et al. Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord 2004;28(5):661-670.)*

- **Percent of calories from fat is down but calorie intake has increased.**

National food intake data indicates that as a population we have reduced the percent of calories coming from fat in the diet. However, the total caloric intake has increased for both men and women over the past three decades. Why has the population been able to

reduce fat but still consume more calories? One reason is that many food products were developed and marketed that were low-fat but high in carbohydrate and calories.

Many people had the misconception that if a food label stated “low-fat or fat-free,” it was okay to eat large quantities with no consequences for weight.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5304a3.htm>

### Low-carbohydrate Diets?

- **A reduced caloric intake is found on traditional low-carbohydrate diets.**

The low-carbohydrate diets currently in vogue may result in weight loss because of reduced food options and thus lower caloric intake. A major concern with low-carbohydrate diets is the reduced intake of dietary fiber and micronutrients that may reduce the risk of developing chronic disease.

*(Denke MA. Am J Cardiol 2001;88:59-61.)*

- **Low-carbohydrate diets (similar to low-fat diets) may be difficult to maintain over an extended period.**

Overtime, the restriction in the variety of foods allowed may reduce adherence to a low-carbohydrate diet. Research indicates that many people on low-carbohydrate diets will revert to previous dietary habits within one year of initiating a low-carbohydrate diet.

*(Foster et al. New Eng J Med 2003;348:2081-2090.)*

- **Individuals may equate “low-carbohydrate” to “eat all you want”.**

Eating larger portions of processed foods marketed as “low carbohydrate” may result in increased caloric intake. No nationwide data is yet available for intake of foods labeled “low carbohydrate”. Currently there is no legal definition of the term “low-carbohydrate” on food labels as regulated by the Food & Drug Administration.

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/owg-rpt.html>

### **Variety, Balance, and Moderation** **Keys to Long-term Weight Control**

- **Check the calories per serving on packaged foods.**

“Calories per serving” information listed on the nutrition label as well as the “number of servings” consumed is

more important than a “low-fat” or “low-carbohydrate” designation.

- **Limit sweetened beverages**  
Emphasize milk, water, or non-sweetened beverages. Calcium in dairy products has been shown to assist with weight control.

- **Include more dietary fiber to promote satiety**

Higher fiber intake slows the absorption of dietary carbohydrate so that it occurs over a longer period of time (lower glycemic index). Slow absorption of carbohydrate has been shown to be beneficial in helping to reduce risk for developing type 2 diabetes and related chronic disease.

- Eat at least 3 servings of whole grains each day
- Eat 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables each day
- Eat 4-5 servings of beans, nuts, and seeds per week.

- **Limit portion sizes**

We eat more when we are served larger portions. So limit initial portion sizes for packaged food, fast food and meals, both at restaurants and at home.

Limiting portions will help control the amount of food and calories consumed.

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