Low Carbohydrate Diets

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Low Carbohydrate Diets: Why You Don't Want the &quot;Experts&quot; to Tell You What to Eat
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Diabetes may be described as a disease of glucose intolerance: high blood glucose is both the characteristic indicator and the cause of complications.

The loss of control of glucose metabolism is what makes a low carbohydrate diet a good therapeutic approach, and it's why I'm astonished that experts encourage people with diabetes to eat carbohydrates and then “cover” them with insulin [1].

I am also surprised to hear negative reactions to carbohydrate restriction from people who have actually seen the benefit. I am rebutting to Hope Warshaw’s recent article, “Why You Don’t Want to Go Low Carb or Vegan,” April/May 2007.

Ms. Warshaw’s argument is that “avoiding carbohydrate, as some low carb diets suggest, does not entirely return blood sugar to optimal.” Ms. Warshaw’s argument is that “avoiding carbohydrate, as some low carb diets suggest, does not entirely return blood sugar to optimal.”

Ms. Warshaw goes on to say, “Second, an adequate amount of carbohydrate is an important component of a healthy eating plan.”

At the 2004 Brooklyn conference on the Nutritional and Metabolic Effects of Low Carbohydrate Diets, William Yancy, Jr., said “If you are taking medication, you should reduce carbohydrates only with medical supervision.” It is true that your brain needs glucose, but glucose can be supplied by the process of gluconeogenesis.
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Figure 1A. Macronutrient consumption during the diabetes epidemic. Data from National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

Figure 1B. Incidence of diabetes by year. Data from National Center for Health Statistics.

The second thing we teach medical students is that almost all the increased caloric intake during the ongoing epidemic of diabetes is from carbohydrates. The only macronutrient that increased significantly was sugar, and sugar is a monocarbohydrate. So we have increased our intake of sugars, and that's the one thing we have increased the most. And we've had the increase in diabetes. So the second thing we teach medical students is that almost all the increased caloric intake during the ongoing epidemic of diabetes is from carbohydrates.

So what is Ms Warshaw's complaint? Well, she points out that "studies that compare low carb diets to conventional diets have found that low carb diets are not as effective in producing weight loss." Studies of low carb diets that last longer than six months do not show significantly more weight loss.

Something's wrong here. Because low carb diets do the same as traditional diets after one year, then you don't want to be on a low carb diet. Triglycerides and HDL (healthy cholesterol) were much better on the low carb diet than the low fat diet (Figure 2).
Reference [3] is important for showing the general health benefits of low carb diets even when a diet is not followed perfectly. I don't know of any study on any other diet that shows such good effects on controlling glucose and insulin without medications.
Ms. Warshaw’s complaint is that these studies “show that many study subjects drop out of the study and are unable to... compliance rather than to dissuade people from a strategy that actually works for the many people who follow it? You might want to think twice before you let Ms Warshaw tell you what you don’t want to do. &quot;

I am most concerned that if Ms. Warshaw really had something positive to offer, she wouldn’t need to dissuade people from making their personal choice. Candy followed by insulin is not good enough.

5. JS Volek, RD Feinman: Carbohydrate restriction improves the features of Metabolic Syndrome...