

Greg Fitzgerald's Health for Life Seminars:

email: info@healthforlife.com.au

www.healthforlife.com.au

02 9544 0445

The Atkins High-Protein Diet: From Fad to Fade

Many of you will have heard of the Atkins Diet. Dr Robert Atkins was an overweight doctor in the late 60's who was frustrated because every diet he tried ended in disappointment. He always regained the weight. In desperation he tried eating only animal protein foods- meat, eggs, fish, chicken, cheese etc & cut out all carbohydrates- bread, cereals, fruit, rice, potatoes, corn & other starchy vegetables. Abracadabra! He lost weight & kept it off for a number of years. Because he lost weight he extrapolated that this regime was the answer to the world's health problems.

This was the genesis of one of the most popular selling diet book in history. And the most dangerous! I read his first book- The Atkins Diet- in the early 70's & was amazed then that many people would give credence to it. One statement that jumped out at me when I read the book was enough to convince me that the good doctor's claims were not to be taken seriously. Back to that later. However, most authorities at the time savaged the book & it faded out of mainstream consciousness until it resurfaced again in the late 90's under the name The Dr Atkins New Diet Revolution. It went gangbusters! Some Hollywood celebrities endorsed it after losing weight & the world went crazy for it. It led to the low-carb, high- protein fad which spawned subsequent best sellers like The South Beach Diet & The CSIRO Diet. The new book quickly sold 15 million copies & was followed by a plethora of Atkins low -carb, high- protein foodstuffs & a range of Atkins vitamins & minerals. Atkins Nutritionals Inc. became a multi- hundred million dollar enterprise.

At its height between 2000- 2003, the diet allowed up to two-thirds of calories from fat & completely excluded fruit. The first page of Dr Atkins Health Revolution states: **“Imagine losing weight with a diet that lets you have bacon & eggs for breakfast, heavy cream in your coffee, plenty of meat & even salad with dressing for lunch & dinner!”**

From Dr Atkins 2001 Health Revelations Special Report: **“ Reverse Heart Disease with Filet mignon! Stop strokes with cheese! Prevent breast cancer with butter!”**

The Dangers of High Protein Diets.

There are over 3,500 scientific studies involving more than 15,000 research scientists reporting the relationship between the consumption of meats, poultry, eggs & dairy products & the incidence of heart disease, alzheimers, osteoporosis, cancer, kidney failure, constipation, gallstones, diverticulitis, arthritis just to name a few.

Despite the avalanche of evidence incriminating this dangerous fad, it continued to gain disciples, especially in the States where the low-carb craze was at its strongest. With over 66% of the population overweight (including one third obese), people saw this as their weight-loss answer.

High protein, low carb, low fibre diets like this are NEVER compatible with good health. They probably will result in weight loss short term which is mostly fluid. But inevitably, due mainly to the **low grade metabolic acidosis** that too much animal protein causes, this way of eating leads to various diseases.

Dr Atkins himself was overweight & suffered from high blood pressure & congestive heart failure when he died at age 72 in 2003. His death & his reported condition prior to that was one of the main reasons why the popularity of his diet dropped. In fact in 2008 his company, Atkins Nutritionals Inc., filed for bankruptcy protection in the USA . A classic case of fad to fade, boom to bust. It is amazing that a dietary regime so bereft of scientific evidence & so contrary to basic common sense could prove so popular. It was no co-incidence that its popularity paralleled the obesity epidemic.

Hung by the Tongue

What was the one thing that stood out to me 30 years ago? The statement by Dr Atkins that his diet was the most healthy & natural diet for man but he gave one caveat-it was not to be followed by pregnant women! I felt then & still feel now that what's good for the gander should be good for the pregnant goose.

Furthermore, Atkins advocated taking large doses of supplements while following his diet. On page 103 of his 1999 book *The New Diet Revolution* it states: "many of my patientstake over 30 vitamin pills a day". That is certainly hard to swallow!

Dr T. Colin Campbell, Professor of Nutrition at Cornell University states on page p97 in his groundbreaking book 'The China Study' about Atkins: "Perhaps it is a testament to the power of modern marketing savvy that an obese man with heart disease & high blood pressure became one of the richest snake oil salesman ever to live."

The Facts

As far as nutrition is concerned, the overwhelming evidence suggests that a predominantly plant-based diet is the healthiest to follow. This means eating most of your food from fruits & vegetables, legumes, nuts, grains & seeds. Animal foods should be eaten sparingly & should not comprise a large part of your diet. If meat, chicken or fish is consumed then they should comprise the minor part of the meal, ambushed by fresh raw salad vege's or lightly steamed vege's.

Vegetables should be liberally consumed- both in the form of raw salads, & steamed or baked vegetables & soups. This point cannot be emphasised strongly enough. Every health organisation in the world, bar none, agrees on this point. The only difference will be on quantity. The current recommendation of between 3 & 5 servings per day is not sufficient for optimal health. It would be wise to double it.

EATING IN THE RAW: The importance of fruit & Vegetables

Those who experience the best health for life eat raw salads regularly, not just a slice of tomato with an anaemic piece of lettuce, which is what many people call a salad these days. Include 4 to 6 different salad vege's- dark green lettuce leaves & celery, tomato, carrot, cucumber & raw beans, cauliflower or broccoli. Yes RAW! These are treasure chests of nutrients with vitamins, minerals, enzymes & roughage.

Have no fear of potatoes, carrots & other starchy vegetables. Because they are carbohydrates they have been recently maligned as having a high GI (Glycemic Index) & should be avoided. This is incorrect. It is the oil & fat that is added to the spuds (potatoes for those living in Asia who are reading this) that is the problem. Try adding ripe avocado to your baked spud, sweet spud or pumpkin. Yum!! If you are quite overweight, go easy on the avocado until your weight normalises.

Fresh fruits are also highly recommended. In fact, diets that are low in fresh, raw fruit are one of the dietary markers for increased cancer incidence. Some people are sensitive to certain fruits so make sure you select those fruits which are "safe".

Fresh fruits & vegetables (F & V), eaten frequently & liberally, are the basis of superior health-promoting diets. It has been shown repeatedly that people who consume F & V well above the recommended amount on a daily basis have far less cancer, heart disease, diabetes & arthritis.

Lessons from Nature

Plant based foods are living foods, especially when consumed uncooked & fresh. Man is the only animal on earth that eats cooked food, as all other animals except domesticated ones eat raw, natural food. Aim for half of your diet being uncooked vege's & fruits.

Man is the only animal that drinks milk after weaning. If we were meant to drink milk then women would be lactating for life. In fact, if you do drink milk, consider yourself still breast - fed – only by a cow! There are 4000 mammals in the animal kingdom (mammals suckle their young) & yet no mammal drinks another mammal's milk because all mammalian milks are completely different & uniquely designed by nature to meet the individual needs of that mammal. Besides, cows have 4 stomachs to digest the milk!

Man is the only animal that drinks when he is not thirsty & eats when he is not hungry! (We are told to drink 8 glasses of water a day & advised to eat 3 meals a day or when you feel your tummy rumble). If you want superior health for life, then drink when you are thirsty & do not eat if you are not hungry. Hunger has nothing to do with tummy rumbling. It is signalled by a sensation in the mouth or throat, such as when young babies lick their lips & salivate;

#Man is the only animal who eats when he is sick (a dog might chew grass so as to regurgitate its stomach contents). This is one of the greatest "secrets" to life-long vibrant health. Explore the area of therapeutic fasting- it can literally save your life.

Man is the only animal who is confused about what he should eat. In 1923 there were 12 food groups, little advertising & no confusion. In 2005 there are only 4 food groups, much advertising & much confusion. The food pyramid was abolished in May, 2011 & replaced with “MyPlate”.

Never confuse fitness with health. They are two very different things. Many people I see are physically fit but suffering from serious illness. Avoid the trap of thinking just because you exercise you then are “protected” from degenerative disease.

Last lesson from nature: eat to live, don't live to eat!

Quote of the month:

“With health everything is a source of pleasure; without it nothing else, whatever it may be, is enjoyable. Health is by far the most important element in human happiness.”

Arthur Schopenhauer.