

Atkins Schmatkins- The Body Needs Carbs!!

By Lou Lombardo, LMT, NCTMB

Try operating your car when the battery is low. Sure, it might be possible to get started, but you're going to have to get jumped every time you run the battery down. And that can be a pain in the rear bumper.

The same thing happens to your body when you go on diets like Atkins and South Beach. You end up operating with less energy and you need something else to get jump-started. And, chances are that something else will result having a negative effect on you.

The human body is a highly efficient system that relies on a balance of carbohydrates, fats (lipids) and proteins to survive. Eliminate one and you force the body to rely on the other two. This ultimately leads to problems as your systems become overtaxed.

Carbohydrates are the most abundant food source of energy available to the body. They also add necessary bulk to assist in the digestive process. Simple carbs such as glucose and fructose are sugars found in fruits and vegetables and provide the body with short bursts of energy. Complex carbohydrates like starch, glycogen and fiber are found in pasta, breads and certain animals. Stored in the liver they will be used by the body when needed. The leftover ones are stored as fat.

No-carb diets target both simple and complex carbohydrates. The theory is that, if you eliminate them, you'll reduce your weight. But these diets force the body to use proteins or lipids for energy. When the body digests these substances, the resulting by-products increase acidity which, in turn, upsets the chemistry of the body. When carbohydrates are digested they "burn clean" with no harmful by-products given off.

Eliminating simple carbs in fruits & vegetables deprive the body of nutrients and vitamins. When you eliminate complex carbs, the body doesn't have any stored energy to call upon when needed. Also, each individual cell of the body needs glucose (simple carbs) to carry out their functions. And glucose is the only source of energy for the brain. That's why you get that dizzy feeling when you don't have enough of it..

People on low carb diets also tend to be cranky. When you don't enough carbohydrates, the levels of serotonin, a substance that relaxes you, decreases. Less relaxed means more cranky.

Some low carb diets call for high amounts of protein. This can result in damage to the kidneys. In addition, when you are on high protein diets your body composition will change as you convert muscle to fat. When you go off these diets, the weight comes back as fat instead of muscle.

So, whether you prefer to get your carbs from fruits, vegetables, pastas, or in liquid form mixed with barley & hops (empty carbs by the way), a good balance of simple & complex carbohydrates, taken in moderation with proteins and fats, make for a healthier body. So eat a cup of pasta instead of a whole plate. Cut down on white bread. And have an apple for dessert.

And while you're at it remember that massage therapy is not only carb friendly, but also cholesterol free!

(Editor's Note: Lou Lombardo is a NYS Licensed Massage Therapist, certified nationally by the NCBTMB and is a certified Strength Training Specialist.)