

Weight Loss Myth: CARBS ARE BAD FOR YOU!

By Kelly Huggins, Owner of Fitness Together North Buckhead in Atlanta, GA

Let's get real about it; this fallacy was started by the most popular diet of all time, the Atkins Diet. Constantly, I hear people mention that they try to avoid carbohydrates. Though it seems that the marketplace is getting wiser, at the same time, this fallacy seems to raise its ugly head constantly.

First of all, let me begin by saying that you need carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are your primary source of energy. **Without carbohydrates, your body will begin to do some crazy things in order for you to get your energy requirements.** Here's a closer look at carbs:

Carbs are **fruits**, **vegetables**, **grains**, and **nuts**. Would you argue that fruits and vegetables are bad for you? How about whole grains like oatmeal, and nuts like almonds? These are whole foods that have fiber, vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, and antioxidants. They are good for you! You should at least eat fruit 2 times per day and vegetables 3 times per a day (the more the better). You should eat whole grains at least 3 times per day.



Avoid Processed Carbohydrates. The problem with carbohydrates is what we do to them. They are stripped of their fiber, stripped of their nutrients, we add food color, sugar, sometimes fat, sodium, and all kinds of crazy stuff and put them in a box, bottle, plastic wrapper, etc. In other words, we turn them in to junk food. As a result of processing, the glycemic index also goes up.



What is the Glycemic Index (GI)? The glycemic index is basically a value system based on a scale of 0-100. Carbs that are high GI break down much faster than those that are low GI. Thus, eating high GI carbs (close to 100) like a bag of pretzels (and most junk food) can raise

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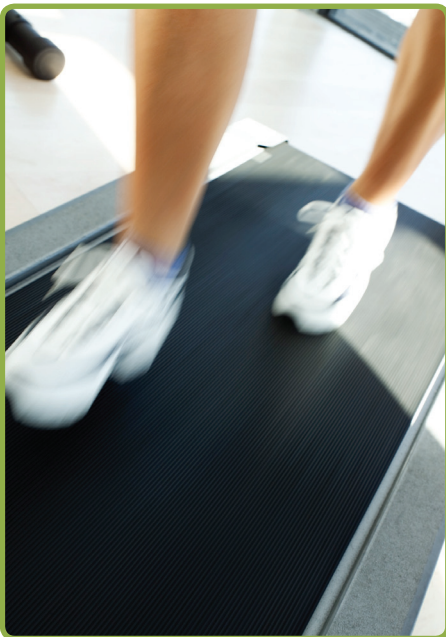
blood sugar faster (aka “the sugar spike”), which in turn can cause a sudden rush of insulin over compensation (an “insulin rush”). As a result, your blood sugar then dips. This is when you begin to feel groggy and crappy, thus leading you to pick up your favorite high GI snack to make you feel normal.

Carbohydrates power your brain and your muscle. You need carbs to fuel the brain. It’s the only source of fuel the brain uses. The only exception is a by product of fat called ketone bodies (this is the premise behind Atkins through a process called ketosis). Your body only uses ketone bodies as a last resort and it is inefficient. It’s kind of like trying to use alcohol to fuel your car instead of gasoline. It works, but it’s really hard on the engine. Ketone bodies are hard on the brain.

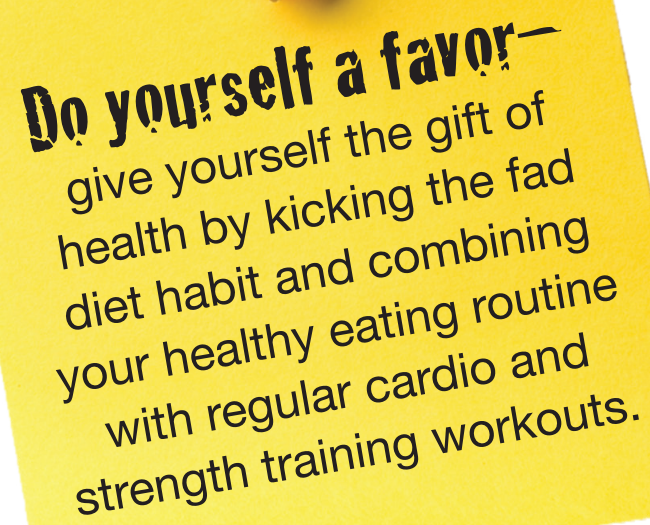
Carbohydrates are Protein Sparing. Without ingesting carbs, your body will breakdown muscle protein if you do not get enough carbs. Why? You need glucose to fuel the muscle and other tissues. With exception to the brain, muscle is the most metabolically active tissue in the body. When you lose muscle, you decrease your metabolism. In other words, you hold on to body fat better. (Other things begin to

transpire, such as hormonal shifts also occur. These shifts also decrease your metabolism.)

The Thermic Effect of Food. You actually utilize a certain amount of calories in digestion alone. Foods that require more energy require more caloric expenditure. Carbs that are high in fiber are the ones that have the greatest thermic effect. Usually, carbs that are low GI have the greatest thermic effect. Once again, these are real foods such as **fruits**, **vegetables**, **grains**, and **nuts**.



So, there you have it. Carbohydrates are good for you. One of the errors of the low carb myth coincides with just about every diet. That is, they do not include exercise as a part of the equation and they are quick weight loss gimmicks. This is flawed and misleading. Instead of going on a diet, get active and change your lifestyle. Quick fixes never work for the long term and usually make your situation worse.



Do yourself a favor—
give yourself the gift of health by kicking the fad diet habit and combining your healthy eating routine with regular cardio and strength training workouts.

If you're tired of the same old diets and gimmicks, it's time to call the experts at Fitness Together where we combine state of the art training with nutritional guidance. Find a studio near you today at www.FitnessTogether.com.

