

CARB-AVOIDER'S HANDBOOK

Tips, Tricks, and Treats

in

Plain Language

by

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Introduction

The “No-Carb” Craze! It’s everywhere, isn’t it? Even fast-food restaurants are offering low-carb items. Carbohydrate avoidance is a popular topic.

Everybody wants to take advantage of the “craze,” seems like. Not me. I don’t think it’s a craze. It’s been around for more than 30 years.

I want to help you by sharing what I’ve learned about carbohydrates and low-carbohydrate recipes from 30 years of yo-yo dieting and weight problems (which I may have for the rest of my life).

Some of us just do better if we lower the carbohydrates in our meals, and if you are one of them, you will probably benefit from this little book. Others cannot do without fruit and bread, and if you’re one of them, this little book won’t help you—unless you’re desperate.

I started experimenting with lowering my carbohydrate intake back in 1972 when Dr. Robert Atkins first told the world about how low-carbohydrate meals can get rid of our stored fat. It made so much sense. And it worked like a dream! I lost 30 pounds in a month, and when I was that young, 30 pounds was all I needed to lose. But I didn’t stay with it. I didn’t gradually add carbs back, and I didn’t stay under 20 grams per day on maintenance. I went back to my old carbohydrates-be-damned way of eating—thinking I could just go back on Atkins for a few days and get it off. Not only did that 30 pounds come back, but so did a lot more. I messed up. Many times.

As I aged and my metabolism slowed, I retained more pounds after backsliding. I found it harder to lose the weight. I had a hysterectomy and gained 30 more pounds. Several years later I quit smoking and put on another 30 pounds. After that I gained 8 pounds a year, no matter what.

I tried everything. I did the South Beach thing. I did the vegetarian thing. I did the grapefruit thing. I did the cabbage soup thing. There’s no diet I didn’t try. And I generally went back to the Atkins thing, but I overdid it when I “cheated.” I didn’t make a real lifestyle change of it, as we all know we must, to be successful. We must change our eating habits.

So eventually I got back to the low-carbo thing, but I made it the NO-carb thing. Every day my goal was to have no carbohydrates, but I realized that not only is Zero Carbohydrates hard to do but it is probably unhealthy for any sustained time period. Here’s what I learned.

Disclaimer

I am not a doctor. I am not a nurse. I am not a health care professional of any kind. I do not hold any license to give advice on any subject. I am a plain-language writer, though, and I hope this book is very clear in what it tries to say.

I do wish, however, that someone had shared this information with me, instead of my having to learn it through that Great Teacher–Experience. So I want to share it with you. I encourage you to do your own investigation of anything in this little handbook. I encourage you to take what will help you and discard all the rest. I don't want or need any disciples.

In this little book I will refer to the late Dr. Robert Atkins, who is considered by most people to be the #1 Guru of low-carbohydrate dieting. I suggest that you read everything that he has written. There are other experts on low-carbohydrate eating as well, and I can't say whether any of them are “good” or “bad,” but I do recommend that you arm yourself with facts, wherever you can find them.

Basics of Carb-Avoiding

If you learn these Basic Principles (I'll call them just "Basics") of Carb-Avoiding, you will understand how to be successful at avoiding carbohydrates. I will list these Basics that I have learned and discuss them a bit. After you have read this little book, I direct you to complete your own personal search for knowledge concerning any of these Basic Principles.

BASIC 1

If your body has no carbohydrates coming in,
it will use its stored-up fat for energy.

BASIC 2

Water and protein help carry away your stored-up fat.

BASIC 3

Count carbohydrate grams and read all labels.

BASIC 4

Carb-avoidance requires a LOT of preparation.

Discussion of the Basics

BASIC 1

**If your body has no carbohydrates coming in,
it will use its stored-up fat for energy.**

This is the backbone of carbohydrate avoidance. We do not want carbohydrates in the diet, because our body will use them as its #1 energy source. What are carbohydrates? They are the starches and the sugars. They are found in bread, desserts, milk, vegetables, cheeses, and some meats—especially those that use sugar or honey in their processing. The energy needed for walking, lifting, any kind of physical movement, and yes, even working at a computer keyboard requires the burning of calories (units of heat). The more we move around, the more calories we burn. If we use up more calories than we take in, we lose weight.

On the other hand, if your body has carbohydrates coming in, it will use them for energy and leave your stored-up fat right where it is. So if you are not going to be taking in carbohydrates, what is left? Proteins and Fat. That dreaded, much-maligned Fat will be your friend as you avoid carbs, because it gives you so many choices of foods to eat. Calories will still be the unit of measurement, but the method of burning those calories is what we are concerned with here. Do not read on until you understand these two paragraphs.

How do you know if your body is using its stored-up fat for energy? Dr. Atkins says it's when your body is in a state of *ketosis*. He has a big explanation of a “fat-mobilization hormone” that's activated when we are in a state of ketosis. We can have living proof of ketosis through the use of Ketostix®, which are reagent strips that can be purchased over the counter from your pharmacist. After a day or two of Zero Carbohydrates, you should urinate on a Ketostix® or dip one in your urine. On the side of the bottle will be a color chart that tells you how deep you are into ketosis. If your strip turns color at all, you are in ketosis. The more purple, the more of your stored-up fat is being used for energy, and, logically, the more weight you will lose.

BASIC 2

Water and protein help carry away your stored-up fat.

As I understand it, a low-carbohydrate, high protein, moderate fat (which is the combination carb-avoiders most desire) takes away fat from your middle like no other diet. Those of us who are apple-shaped persons (and science tells us the most likely for a heart attack) do well as carb-avoiders, because that's where most of our stored-up fat resides—our middle, below the shoulders and above the knees. If we get enough protein and water to help it on its way out of our system, the fat will easily be gone—sooner for the younger people and later for the older ones, but gone nevertheless.

You will need to find a way to choke down **eight glasses of water every day**. That means eight 8-ounce glasses, not eight juice glasses or shot glasses. It means 64 ounces. And it means water—not coffee or tea or soda, but water.

You will need to eat as much protein as you can. That means meat, fish, and zero-carbohydrate cheese (read those cheese labels carefully!) You can add tofu later if you like it, but so far I haven't found any zero-carb tofu.

BASIC 3

Count carbohydrate grams and read all labels.

You want to see “Total Carbohydrates 0” on everything you eat. You also want to see “Total Sugars 0” on everything.

Make sure you read the serving size. The gram count will be *per serving*, and you will need to multiply that if you are having more than one serving.

Avoid words ending in “ose.” These are probably going to be some form of sugar. Lactose, cellulose, glucose, etc., etc.

BASIC 4

Carb-avoidance requires a LOT of preparation.

Just get ready. You’re going to spend a lot of time at the grocery store and in the kitchen. You can do okay at restaurants, but you don’t always know what they use, so if you fix your own food, you will be sure you are getting zero carbohydrates.

Materials you will need:

The **mixer** will be your constant pal. You will need a mixer for beating egg whites and for whipping cream, which you will probably do every day—or at least every other day, depending on how many carb-avoiders are in your family. I find that a hand mixer works just fine, but if you can afford a fancy one that does the work for you, go for it. If you have been wise enough to buy a “Magic Bullet,” you will give thanks every day. You can even whip cream with the flat blade.

You will also need a proper bowl, which should be a **glass bowl** that holds more than two quarts and has a pour spout and a handle. Pampered Chef® makes a perfect one. Those that have a totally flat bottom, as opposed to a narrow bottom that slopes and widens toward the tip, are not as good but they will do. Also, the plastic ones will do, but sometimes it’s hard to get egg whites stiff in a plastic bowl.

You will need a two-cup **measuring cup**. Again, the glass ones are the best by far. Many of the recipes in this little book call for proper measuring.

Pan with a spout for boiling liquids; this pan must hold four cups of liquid with a little room to spare.

Tools you will use frequently are a **spatula**, sharp **knives** (both serrated and smooth), a **pancake turner** (but you’ll never use it on pancakes!), a **wooden spoon**, and a **slotted serving spoon**.

Grocery items you will need regularly:

A sugar-free, calorie-free sweetener. Buy this in as big a container as you can find. Find one that measures just like sugar for ease of use, such as Erythritol or Xylitol. You will need to find them on the Internet. Erythritol is by far the best, because there's no danger of diarrhea as there may be with Xylitol. Both are made from either tree bark or corn. The SoBe drinks have started using erythritol, and now it's flying off of the shelves! It's been really hard to get, but hopefully that will change. Netrition Inc. Does have two brands in one-pound bags, but I like to buy a five-pound bag for economy, as it's very expensive. Some of the natural sweeteners sound like chemical names, but they are natural products. Stevia® is a natural sweetener that is very concentrated, and it can be found on the Internet or in health food stores. Many regular grocery stores also carry it. It is so concentrated, however, that it is, for me, difficult to use. Erythritol and Xylitol also come in powdered form. A caution about Splenda: I was devastated to learn that, while made from sugar as the ads claim, it is made with a known cancer causer—chlorine. This is why you will not find it in health food stores. It is NOT NATURAL. I suggest that you stay away from it in all forms. (See end of this work for an additional note about Splenda.) And you don't have to look very far to find articles about how bad Aspartame is for you. Start with brain tumors and work your way through the mess. Another one to stay away from. Of all the sweeteners on the market that are easily found, saccharine is probably the best, but even it's bad for you. When I go to Europe or South America, or friends go, cyclamates come back. What a pity the sugar industry kept this product from us and now 40 years later, it's still sold in other countries, sweetening things just fine, without the cancer that sugar industry and its fake studies showed.

Sugar-free drinks. If you have one every now and then, such as for cooking, they're probably okay. But a steady diet of several a day and you're just asking for trouble. Most of them are sweetened with Aspartame or Splenda. Ugh. I find that herbal teas are the best, and they are usually caffeine-free. In addition, I've found a great drink that seems to lower my blood sugar, and I've been drinking it almost exclusively since I discovered it. You get the big leaves from a loquat tree and shop them up. Mix about ½ to ¾ cup of these chopped loquat leaves with about 4 sticks of cinnamon and boil them together in about a gallon of water for about 10 minutes, then turn heat down and simmer for another 20 minutes. Then remove from the fire and let steep for an hour. Strain this and sweeten with Erythritol. You can then get about two more boilings from this mixture. It's super!

Sugar-free gelatin (Jello® brand or store brand doesn't matter, but you will probably find more flavors in the Jello® line) will save you from cheating. Don't even think about the gelatin with sugar in it. You will also need unflavored gelatin (Knox® or store brand), and I suggest you buy it in the biggest box you can find. (Yes, vegans won't eat it.)

Whipping cream. Read the labels carefully and make sure there are Zero Sugars and Zero Carbs. Some whipping creams, also called heavy cream, must have milk mixed in or something, because they will have carbs in them. Avoid these creams and keep shopping till you find Zero Carbohydrates. But as big a carton as you can get, because it keeps a really long time, as you will see from the date on the carton. You will use this in your coffee and you can mix it with water and use it in place of milk. (Milk contains lactose, so that's a no-no for carb-avoiders.)

Eggs. I buy the jumbo ones, just because they have more "stuff" (some of them even have two yolks!). Egg whites are loaded with protein, and you can have all you want without ever worrying about cholesterol. It's the yolks that might present problems with cholesterol, but it has not happened to me, and I eat about two dozen eggs a week. There will be times when you will throw egg yolks away. Just go ahead and do it with a clear conscience. But hang on! I've recently discovered the substitute eggs, which are made mostly from egg whites, so you get all of that protein and hardly any cholesterol! Expensive but worth it.

Canned fish (tuna and salmon) will help you on those days you just couldn't get to the store. You don't want to overdo the tuna, just because of all those mercury "scares" out there, but as in most things in life, moderation in all things

Flour substitute. I found a product called "Carb Solutions," and it works just great. It has three grams of carbohydrates in two scoops, which is less even than Atkins baking mix. It's flavored with vanilla, but I haven't found that to be a problem in my use of it. It's been a mainstay with me for my bread substitutes. The label identifies

a Web site of CarbSolutions.com and a toll-free number, 1-888-776-5383. It appears to be meant to be used as a protein drink, but I'm just tickled to death to find it for use as a thickener.

Bread substitute: You must find Ezekiel bread. It's usually in the frozen food section of health food stores or departments, and though expensive, it's fantastic. It's made from sprouted grains, and NO FLOUR. You can even use this bread to make bread crumbs for meatballs! So versatile, so healthy, and so worth every penny!

Vitamins. You're not going to be getting vitamins from your diet, so you must take supplements. These will vary depending on your age, and I leave it to you and your own personal investigation as to what you need each day and how you will get it. Just know that you need to take supplements.

Fiber therapy pills or powders (make sure there's no carbohydrate in them). Since you're not getting fruits and vegetables, you will need to use some form of fiber to aid in elimination. Use a good colon cleanse, and NEVER use laxatives. Drug chains have their own lines of "fiber therapy caplets" and other items that promise to give you the fiber you need. In addition, the eight glasses of water help with elimination. While it's not appetizing to talk about, you may find yourself constipated on this diet. If you do, it will be because you have not consumed enough water or fiber. Low-carb, high-water-content vegetables like lettuces, broccoli, cauliflower, and squash, should be a mainstay for you and will give you plenty of fiber.

Recipes and How-Tos:

To stay with this plan you just must have some good recipes. Here are some recipes I've created from experience and redoing and throwing out and improving on.

Gelatin Snacks

Since we can't have candy on this eating plan, it's easy to keep from cheating if we have some kind of substitute. I have found that gelatin snacks are the answer, and I have developed two recipes, and perhaps you can even improve on them yourself.

Flavored Gelatin Snacks

3 small packages sugar-free Jello® or store brand sugar-free gelatin

(it's good to select all the same flavor, but there are some flavors that are easily mixed, such as strawberry and orange—you will want to experiment)

4 packages unflavored gelatin

1/4 cup sweetener

4 cups boiling water

(Other extracts and flavorings as you may desire; see notes below.)

Mix dry items together in a large glass bowl with a pouring spout. A wooden spoon or a slotted serving spoon works well, especially when you add the boiling water.

As water comes to a boil, remove from heat and pour over dry items gradually, to keep the unflavored gelatin from lumping. Stir well until all dry ingredients are completely dissolved. This could take up to five minutes.

When mixed thoroughly, pour mixture into a 13"x9"x2" pan and place in the refrigerator. (No ice, no cold water, just put this hot mixture into the refrigerator.)

Rinse the bowl and spoon with hot water. If you use cold, it will want to gel. Then wash with soapy water, rinse with hot water, and dry.

The gelatin mixture will take about an hour and a half to completely gel. Two to three hours will make it last longer when you start eating it. When ready, cut into little squares, or use a cookie cutter for other shapes. If you remove a corner first with the point of the knife, the rest will just pull up by hand. Store in recloseable sandwich bags and put back in the refrigerator.

These gelatin snacks will keep a long time out of the refrigerator. When I put them in my purse at 7:30 in the morning, they're still good by 3:30 or 4 in the afternoon. And just think how they might help your nails!

I like to sweeten whipped cream and dip the gelatin squares in it for added dessert-like treats. Some people just dip them in heavy cream. You'll think you're having dessert! And when you get those munchies at your desk, they will keep you on the Zero-Carb path to slenderness.

For variation with this recipe, you can experiment with adding extracts to the hot mixture just before pouring it in the pan. For instance, I like to add peppermint flavoring to lime gelatin and coconut flavoring to cherry-flavored gelatin. Lemon extract makes a wonderful addition to lemon-flavored gelatin, for those who really, really love lemon.

Drink-flavored Gelatin Snacks

If you don't have packaged flavored gelatin, you can make gelatin snacks using a fruit-flavored drink, such as Kiwi-Strawberry DietRite®, and unflavored gelatin.

5 packages unflavored gelatin

2/3 can (1 cup) of sugar-free fruit-flavored drink that is *cold*

Sprinkle dry gelatin into the cold drink and stir till dissolved

Add 1/4 cup sweetener to the cold mixture

Heat two 12-ounce cans (3 cups) of sugar-free fruit-flavored drink to boiling and then add it to the gelatin mixture; stir completely till the bubbles disappear (may take up to five minutes)

Pour into 13"x9"x2" pan and refrigerate for four hours. Cut into squares and store in recloseable sandwich bags in the refrigerator. Carry with you for snack attacks.

Lemon Pie

You won't believe this pie is less than about three grams per slice. For those times you need a treat—such as birthdays—this pie will help you stay on your card-avoiding path.

Crust: butter pie plate; grind pecans in coffee bean grinder; mix with whisked egg white to hold together. Add Vanilla hi-protein drink powder for flour substitute; pat into pie plate and bake at 350 till crusty.

Topping: XX whipping cream, whipped with ½ c. sweetener (erythritol, e.g.) per pint of cream; add vanilla; refrigerate to stiffen.

Filling: Large pkg regular cream cheese, mixed well with 1 beaten egg; add ½ c. sweetener, 1 t. Vanilla; add lemon juice gradually to taste (key limes are even better); mix well.

Pour filling into pie shell and bake at 350 for 6 to 10 minutes till set. Let cool and refrigerate.

For variation, add another pkg. cream cheese to whipped cream topping; or use chocolate instead of lemon.

Breakfast Clue: A big, high-protein breakfast is the absolute key to weight loss and lowering blood sugar. I find that a bed of lettuce with sliced avocado, tomatoes, crumbled turkey bacon, and boiled or fried egg is just the ticket for me.

Additional note about Splenda:

The Commercial Court of Paris has found that advertising claims used by McNeil Nutritionals, the marketers of the artificial sweetener Splenda, violate French consumer protection laws. They ruled that Splenda's advertising slogans, such as "Because it comes from sugar, sucralose tastes like sugar," are misleading to consumers, and have ordered McNeil to stop using them.

The case was brought against French subsidiaries of McNeil Nutritionals by the competing artificial sweetener firm Merisant. The court awarded Merisant 40,000 Euros in damages.

McNeil was given 30 days to amend all packaging of Splenda in France. The Court also prohibited the distribution of any products in the old packaging after a period of four months.

The ruling came just one day before a similar case between Merisant and McNeil in the United States resulted in an undisclosed settlement agreement that concluded a three-year court battle between the two companies. McNeil also faces a similar case in the United States brought by the Sugar Association.