



LOW CARB CRAZY

THE SKINNY ON HIGH-FAT, LOW-FIBER DIETS.
 STORY AND PHOTOS BY KARMAN RATLIFF

Nearly every interaction I have with people has something to do with carbs. At the coffee shop where I work, drinks made with 4 ounces of espresso, 1.5 ounces of sugar-free syrup and a whopping 11.5 ounces of cream make me wonder if it really works, or if the low-carb craze is just a money-making scheme by the beef industry. Maybe you've seen hoards of people, their faces pressed to the glass as they ogle forbidden baguettes and sourdough loaves. Maybe you know a downtown office where the bowl of candy on the receptionist's desk has been replaced by a big bowl of pork rinds.

As more overweight Americans decide to give low carbohydrate diets like Atkins and South Beach a try, it's astounding that what seemed like a passing fad has worked its way into every aspect of popular culture. You don't have to go to the low-carb superstore to find out what I mean. Low-carb fast-food items are advertised back-to-back with low-carb beer. In the supermarket, little yellow tags advise customers which snacks will help them stay "carb conscious."

Why does it work? By depriving the body of carbohydrates and the sugars it normally uses for energy, it goes into a state called ketosis, a natural response to starvation in which it burns fat for fuel.

"One of the breakdown byproducts (of ketosis) is ketones," says Dr. Victoria Skellercf of the UO Health Center, "which make you smell like nail polish remover, feel tired and can cause nausea (which cer-

tainly helps curb the appetite)." She adds that in healthy people, this state can be managed, but it does cause extra stress on the liver and kidneys.

It makes sense that cutting sugar and starchy processed carbohydrates from your diet would help you reach a healthy weight. The problem that many people have is the mentality that if it's low in carbs, it must be good for you. But is a lettuce-wrapped Whopper or a cheesy, bacon ranch wrap really all that much better for you?

Dr. Skellercf says no, and although they may be low in carbohydrates, such foods are still very high in calories and sodium and very low in nutritious vitamins and trace elements. "It is still high fat and thus, not very healthy," she says.

Diets like Atkins have been easy for people to stick with because, unlike low calorie diets, all of the protein and fats leave you feeling full. But it is important to remember

that people looking for a quick weight loss fix don't often stop to look at the long-term effects of a high-fat, low-fiber diet. Dr. Skellercf says *if* you lose weight, yes, your cholesterol could be reduced and your body's ability to handle sugars could improve. But if you don't lose weight, your cholesterol levels will probably rise significantly.

"Long-term, we know there is an increased association of breast, prostate and possibly ovarian cancer associated with a high-fat diet," she says.

So what does this craze mean for the industries that have been at the base of the food pyramid for so long? While pork rind sales rose 18.4 percent to exceed \$420 million last year, according to the Snack Food Association, American bakeries noticed that they might be in trouble. One local baker said that the industry held a national conference last summer to brainstorm a new marketing campaign (think "GOT



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