



## The Atkins Diet

### Forward

This short e-book is inspired by my personal experience with the Atkins diet as well as the experiences of family and friends. Everything written about in this book is TRUE – this is a story of real people and real events.

I am not a doctor, health or nutrition expert. I am a writer, a relatively educated person. I do not infer that I have any expert knowledge on this subject. It is your health, and you must be your own advocate in that regard. I only relate to you the results of my personal observations, nothing more and nothing less.

### Introduction

My wife became interested in the Atkins Diet from the testimony of her sister. This sister has dieted several times, as has my wife, with varying degrees of success.

The one thing their experiences share is dissatisfaction. Though weight loss has indeed been achieved at various times, the weight loss was either unsatisfactory in quantity or left them with a general feeling of decreased health, energy or wellness.

Therefore, my wife, being the disciplined and intelligent person she is, first took the step of learning about the Atkins, or low carbohydrate, diet. I wanted to lose a few pounds as well, so we learned together, with her leading the way.

The circle of people this story revolves around is a total of nine. Nine people who tried the Atkins diet, with varying results as you will see.

Finally, you need to understand that my wife and I took the time, upfront and ongoing, to understand this diet. We actually READ the entire Atkins diet book and many other low-carb information sources BEFORE we started on the diet. From my experience, though Dr. Atkins reinforces this over and over in his book, we are the exception rather than the rule.

## **The Diet is Change**

First, I think it is very helpful to understand the core idea behind the Atkins diet. Several things stood out to me as I came to understand this diet. I believe this is very IMPORTANT, as many attempts to apply the Atkins diet are done without the understanding of these core ideas and affects.

### ***Sugar***

Sugar is one of two big NO NOs in the Atkins diet. It is high in carbohydrates and has a profound affect on your blood chemistry. If you follow the Atkins diet, you must give up your sugar addiction.

One of the core elements of this diet is the need to break your sugar addiction. Yes, you have one. Unless you are actively monitoring and controlling your sugar intake, you are a sugar addict.

You don't think so? Do you drink non sugar-free soda? How about candy, cookies, pies, ice cream, donuts, pastries, Starbucks, prepackaged foods, etc? Do you READ the labels of the packaged foods you buy in the grocery store? Foods such as quick meals, sauces, mixes, breads, instant anything, jello, pudding, fruit, juices, the list goes on and on.

If you are not already doing these things, you are a sugar addict.

### ***Grain and Potatoes***

Grain and potatoes are the other big NO NO. Most grains are high in carbohydrates (although there is a lot of variance based on type of grain and method of processing), as are potatoes. Interestingly, the more refined, or processed they are, the higher carbohydrate content they have. Grain and potatoes are basically taboo on the Atkins diet, with some moderated exceptions. At least they are in the induction phase, which is where the primary weight loss is realized.

That means no pasta, bread, rolls, muffins, breadsticks, crackers, macaroni and cheese, croutons in salads, baked potatoes, french fries, hash browns, potato chips, etc, etc.

### ***Metabolism***

Though at a later stage, the Atkins diet provides for a large degree of variation and adaptation, when you first start on the diet (what Dr. Atkins calls induction) you need to follow the diet religiously to reset your body's blood chemistry and metabolism.

Let me say that again.

In the induction phase, you NEED to follow the diet religiously.

This is specifically required to readjust your body chemistry. So if you think you can just cut out that second or third helping of bread, potatoes or pasta and claim your on the Atkins diet, you stand to realize little, if any, real weight loss.

I personally know of 3 people who are "on" the Atkins diet that have never gone through the induction phase. I have not included them anywhere else in this book, as they have never really tried the diet. They fit in the same category as the people who eat whoppers, fries and a diet coke - the diet coke qualifying them as "on a diet" - yeah, right.

### ***Cooking***

The Atkins diet works best if you are willing to cook. That's right, we're talking buying raw meat and vegetables and actually preparing them for cooking and then cooking them. God forbid such a terrible thing should have to be dealt with but the reality is that virtually every processing step of any kind taken by American Food Companies increases carbohydrates and adds sugar. If you start reading labels at the grocery store, you will find sugar added to everything. Well, except maybe salt, although I heard that was tried several times.

I want to re-emphasize an important point here. Foods that we eat, regardless of what they are, are healthier when prepared from their natural state. Each step or process that food goes through by food preparation companies do not add any health or nutritional benefits other than in some cases the adding of essential vitamins and minerals.

So if you take the time to prepare more of your meals with  
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raw meats, vegetables, fruits and nuts you will also improve the quality of your eating which is an additional health benefit.

### ***Counting Carbs***

Have you ever counted calories or fat on a diet? Well, on Atkins you count carbs.

Unlike calories and fat, I think counting carbs is much more straightforward. Basically, other than potatoes, there are options in all of the food groups that have low carbohydrates.

Most meats have very few carbs. For those who are concerned about fat I point out that it is not a requirement of the Atkins diet to eat lots of red meat. Fish, seafood, fowl, as well as red meat all fit into this diet.

Many vegetables are low carb, so you won't need to give up your greens. You do need to become educated regarding which the carb content of the various vegetables you enjoy.

Many nuts and berries are low carb, again educate yourself on the carb content of the nuts and berries you like.

Fruits are a bit more of a challenge. Most fruits have a significant amount of naturally occurring sugar, increasing the carb count of these products significantly. Fruits are typically NOT part of the earlier stages of the Atkins diet although some fruit can be added later along with portion control. Because the carbs in fruit vary widely make sure you take the time to learn what the carbs are in the fruits you like.

Grains are generally high in carbs but this is a product category that innovation has resulted in a good variety of low carb options. Low carb breads are available from traditional food companies and low carb product companies offer a variety of grain and cooking products as well.

### ***Summary***

The Atkins diet REQUIRES a change of behavior. It REQUIRES that you actually put out effort. For people looking for the "magic" diet that somehow makes them lose weight without effort or change, the Atkins diet will be a serious disappointment.

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The Atkins diet will lead you to breaking your sugar addiction, dramatically limiting your grain intake and the need to read labels and cook from scratch as much as possible. My experience is the diet will not work for a large percentage of Americans, especially those in the more affluent group. The change is too great, the effort not acceptable to their lifestyle.

You get out of this diet exactly what you put into it - or should I say what you put into your mouth? If you want to lose weight and improve your health I think this is the best diet to do so for most people. It's up to you, and depends a lot on whether eating for you is *eating* or an entertainment activity.

## Starting on Atkins

What happened to these nine people who tried the Atkins diet? Well, first they began by dealing with sugar withdrawal. As I have stated, sugar is not just a high-carb product, it also has a profound affect on the body chemistry. What this means for many starting Atkins dieters is sugar withdrawal symptoms.

One of the nine dropped out before completing a single day. In less than twenty-four hours, the affect of not eating sugar was uncomfortable enough for this person that the diet was deemed not worth the effort.

The others all reported a variety of discomforting, including myself. This discomfort was primarily listlessness, headaches, and depression.

By the end of the second day, another person dropped out - again unable to deal with the affects of sugar withdrawal.

The remaining seven made it through this period. It lasted a minimum of two full days and a maximum of five. For most, the third day showed the first strong sides of withdrawal abatement.

So now the group of nine was down to seven.

## Weight Loss

Weight loss kicked in immediately. By the end of the first

week, significant weight loss had been experienced by the remaining six people. Oh, I forgot to mention that shortly after the sugar withdrawal period, one person decided the need to drop off bread and potatoes was too great of a sacrifice.

The weight loss experienced the first week ranged from eight to twelve pounds. Subsequent weeks showed a steady but more moderate weight loss of three to eight pounds. As each person neared a low percentage of body fat, meaning they were easily within the measure of "normal and healthy" for their profile, weight loss tapered off significantly but still continued.

For myself, I have a high metabolism. I was a heavy sugar addict and big on grains and potatoes. In two weeks of induction, I exceeded my weight loss goal of fifteen pounds, and had to immediately adjust my diet to a higher carb content. I had lost almost twenty pounds. I was able to easily gain back five at which point I again had to readjust my carb intake to reach a balance.

These affects and adjustments are all described thoroughly in the Atkins diet book, so I was fully prepared on how to go through this process.

Just for clarification - I have retained my target weight, plus or minus three pounds, now for six months without difficulty.

Also, I readopted my sugar addiction early on in the diet. I only consume about half the sugar I used to but I am definitely addicted to sugar again. However, because my daily carb intake needs to be around 150 carbohydrates, I can get away with this - even though I felt better when I was not addicted to sugar.

One of the other members of the group dropped off the diet - completely. No specific reason is known.

Another of the group modified their diet significantly, though still on Atkins, opting for a much slower weight loss after she reached her first weight target.

Two more of the group dropped off the Atkins diet completely, but then again, still watch carbohydrate content. My understanding is they have maintained their weight loss fairly well intact.

My wife remains on, or at least near, the induction diet. In the first seven months of the diet, she has lost 55 pounds. Her weight loss has slowed over time and she has also increased her daily carb intake some but she is still losing weight.

Looking at the group of nine as a whole, I observe the following points:

Of the nine people who started on Atkins,

- 1) Four are still on it seven months later.
- 2) Two are no longer officially on Atkins, though they still monitor their carb intake and have sustained the weight loss they achieved on Atkins.
- 3) Two of the people dropped the diet for good.
- 4) One, that dropped the diet, has since returned to it.

## **Bad Things**

If a diet is to be a good thing, it should not have bad things, right? Well, such is not always the case. Several people did report certain affects that were directly attributable to the Atkins diet and some that may have been.

## ***Cholesterol***

This is a big issue for a lot of people. Because the Atkins diet does not restrict the eating of meats and fats, in fact it encourages the eating of these, several people were concerned about their cholesterol.

I know of three people who have had their cholesterol measured during this time. Two had no adverse affect. One had high cholesterol.

The one having high cholesterol was the only one not having a recent cholesterol test prior to the start of Atkins. He is one of the two that are no longer on the diet, but still manage their carb intake. I have not heard if his cholesterol has lowered since he has modified his diet to include only small portions of meat and fat.

## ***Bowel Affects***

The change in eating that Atkins requires did affect

everyone who stayed on the diet. I know that two have added psyllium to their daily diet to improve regularity.

An interesting side note -There are many products that are traditionally high in sugar that are now available in low carb alternatives. Many of these use a form of sugar alcohol, a group of products that taste like real sugar but are by and large, indigestible. It was noted by several members of the group (including me) that this products can have a dangerous, ah, *explosive*, side-affect - if you catch my drift. This, I can assure you, is unpleasant.

### **Cost**

At first glance, the Atkins diet looks expensive. In reality, the amount of junk food, snacks and cost of prepackaged products reduced on the diet easily makes up for the increased costs of specialty Atkins products and increased meat consumption.

However, the net result of Atkins is that it is VERY expensive. Want to know why? I'll tell you. If you stay on this diet, the experience of this group suggests you will lose weight, quite a bit of weight. This means that, wa la, your clothes no longer fit. They hang like rags from on you. With Atkins, you can annihilate your wardrobe in a matter of months.

And guess what? The longer you lose weight, the more you will want to have clothes that fit nicely (you'll be proud of your weight loss) and you will continue to shrink out of your wardrobe, even the new stuff you just bought 6 weeks ago. For women this is especially difficult as you may go down a half or a whole shoe size (what if all of your shoes were to big?), and a ring size (ye gads, your jewelry won't fit??).

I mean, it can be really challenging and very costly!

### **Other Considerations**

If you do decide to give the Atkins diet a whirl, there are several other things you need to consider and plan for.

### ***Vitamins and Minerals***

First, your vitamin and mineral intake will change, just as

it does anytime you change your eating habits. Because the Atkins diet excludes things from your diet that you may be used to eating you will likely change the makeup of the vitamins and minerals you get from eating.

Consider adding supplements to your diet. You will need to do the research, and it differs for men and women, but this is something you should seriously consider.

### ***Frequency of Eating***

Energy from carbohydrates can be stored in the body for a long time (fat). When you dramatically reduce the amount of carbs you consume your body's energy is derived from protein which is processed very fast.

This means that you will need hungry quicker and it is very important that you eat when you feel hungry. Eat your meals at regular intervals and keep low carb snacks on hand for those times in between meals when you get hungry. It is important to NOT feel hungry on this diet.

This affect is magnified by the fact that as you proceed on the diet the quantity you eat at meals will be reduced. This will happen naturally - you will simply feel full and not eat as much.

### **The Last Hurrah**

Finally, I'd just like to say that my experience and the personal observations I have made of friends and family that have embarked on the Atkins diet is - the diet works.

But it is not for everyone. It is not for everyone because for it to work you must have discipline, commitment and the willingness and desire to change. This is a tall order for most people. I suspect that most diets require the same thing.

Maybe somebody will invent a magic pill, maybe they already have (I see enough of them plastered all over the store shelves) but I don't want a magic pill or mushroom. I liked reading about Alice in Wonderland but I have no desire to go there.

I guess I'm from the "old school" where the idea of if you want something you have to actually get off your rear end and do things to actually get it applies.

I do know that the Atkins diet is work, and change, and it has delivered results - very impressive results. The average weight loss for the six people that were in the program at the end of five months was 28 pounds, with the least being 15 pounds (me) and the most 55 pounds. That ain't bad.

## **Final Note**

As I final note I think it is of significant value to note that there is an ever increasing list of products and restaurants that provide Atkins "friendly" choices.

For example, inn the grocery store there are breads, soft tortillas, yogurt, ice cream, candy that are low carb all from the traditional food companies with more products appearing all of the time. There are also many low carb product companies that offer a very wide variety of cooking and prepared foods for this diet.

If you get good at counting carbs (by reading labels) and factor serving size into the equation you can also find various cracker products that are low enough in carbs that they can be added to your diet under portion control. These products vary WIDELY, so be smart and learn to read labels.

Atkins is in restaurants as well with Atkins menus appearing in place like TGI Fridays, Black Eyed Pea, Subway, Ruby Tuesday's and more on the way.

This points to one clear fact, for those who chose to go on a low carb diet the choices and convenience of doing so is actually much better than most think with more choices and options appearing on a regular basis.

I hope you have enjoyed this book and that it has been helpful. Again, I am not an expert in dieting or nutrition so you should take the time to do your own research and further educate yourself - it's your body!