



Low-Carb vs Vegan and Vegetarian Diets

By [Kris Gunnars, BSc](#) | April, 2013 | 84,064 views

I have absolutely nothing against vegetarians and vegans.

Everyone is entitled to make their own decisions about their health and what they do with their bodies.

There is no perfect diet for everyone and people can get results on a variety of different diets.

The main purpose of this website is to help people make *informed* decisions based on **real** evidence.

I Often See Vegans Claim That Low-Carb Diets Are “Dangerous”

There are a lot of claims made by vegan proponents that resemble propaganda more than anything else.

One of those claims is that [low-carb diets](#) are “dangerous” – that they lead to heart disease, cancer and whatnot.

This is **completely wrong** and has no scientific basis at all.

In this article, I am going to debunk the myth that vegetarian and vegan diets are superior to low-carb diets, because we do have first-rate scientific evidence that this is not true.

Low-Carb Proven Superior to a Low-Fat Vegetarian Diet

We do have a [randomized controlled trial](#) (RCT) comparing a low-carb diet (Atkins) to a low-fat near-vegan diet (Ornish).

RCTs are the best types of studies to prove cause and effect in humans.

This is scientific evidence, **as good as it gets**.

The study is called [The A to Z Weight Loss Study](#) and was conducted by researchers at Stanford.

In it, they tested 4 different diets: Atkins, Ornish, Zone and LEARN. I’m going to focus on Atkins and Ornish.

The study subjects, who were overweight or obese women, were given a diet book, either *The*



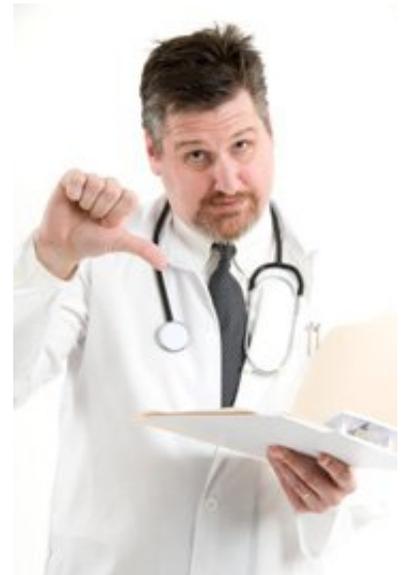
Atkins New Diet Revolution or *Eat More, Weigh Less* and received some counseling on how to follow the two diets.

The Atkins diet, as I'm sure you know, is a low-carb, high-fat diet that includes lots of animal foods and vegetables.

The Ornish diet is an ultra-low-fat vegetarian diet (fat as 10% of calories) that includes almost no animal foods. Small amounts of non-fat dairy and egg whites are allowed in moderation. More details on the diet [here](#).

A total of 77 people were assigned to the Atkins Diet group, while 76 were assigned to Ornish. The study went on for 12 months.

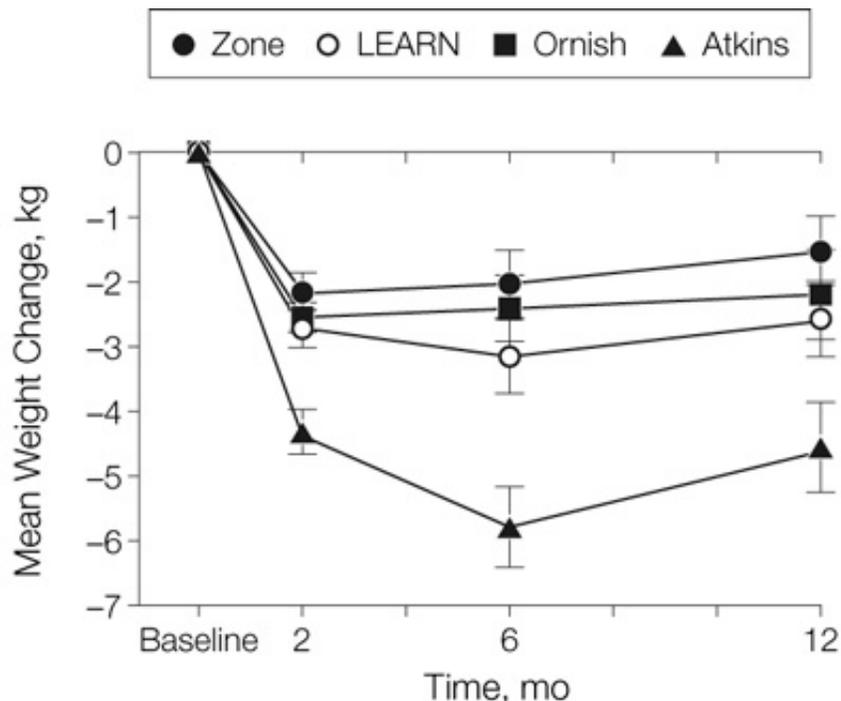
This study is representative of **real world results**. People buying a diet book, making a commitment towards a diet and doing their best to stick to it.



The Study Results

All diets are hard to stick to. At the end, the Atkins group had gravitated towards a 30% carb intake, while the Ornish group had started eating about 30% fat (and probably some amount of animals).

Weight Loss: Individuals in the Atkins group lost more weight, 4.7 kg (10.4 lbs), while the Ornish group lost only 2.6 kg (5.7 lbs). However, the difference was not statistically significant at 12 months.



When you look at health biomarkers, you see where the low-carb diet really starts to shine:

- **Systolic Blood Pressure:** Down 7.6 mmHg on Atkins, down 1.9 mmHg on Ornish.

- **Diastolic Blood Pressure:** Down 4.4 mmHg on Atkins, down 0.7 mmHg on Ornish.
- **HDL (the good) Cholesterol:** Up by 4.9 mg/dL on Atkins, didn't change at all on Ornish.
- **Blood Triglycerides:** Decreased by 29.3 mg/dL on Atkins, down by 14.9 mg/dL on Ornish.

Other markers like glucose and insulin also improved further on Atkins, but didn't reach statistical significance.

LDL cholesterol improved slightly on the Ornish diet at the 2 month mark, but then the difference diminished and was not statistically significant.

There was a staggering difference in the dropout rate. 88% of the Atkins group made it to the end, compared to 78% on Ornish.

To put the data another way, the relative risk of dropout was 1.9 for Ornish compared to Atkins, meaning that the low-fat vegetarian dieters were **almost twice as likely** not to make it to the end of the study.

Out of all 4 diets, the Atkins dieters were most likely to make it to the end. However, the difference was not statistically significant.

Basically, there were several very important advantages for the Atkins diet, while there were **zero advantages** for the Ornish diet.

Atkins did the best out of all 4 diets, while Ornish did **by far the worst**.

This is scientific evidence, as good as it gets, that low-carb diets (that include meat) are superior to vegan diets, at least for overweight / obese premenopausal women.

If you want to see the lead researcher of the study, Dr. Christopher Gardner, explain the results, then watch [this video](#).

Interestingly, Dr. Dean Ornish, despite being very aware of this study, still has the audacity to claim (lie) that low-carb diets are dangerous and peddle his diet as [the optimal human diet](#).

What About The China Study?

The china study is an observational study that apparently proved the harmful effects of animal foods and has been used heavily as vegan propaganda.

This study was an observational study conducted by a biased scientist who was madly in love with his theories.

Citing an observational study when you already have randomized controlled trials showing the opposite result is meaningless.

The data from the china study has been analyzed by objective scientists and they discovered that the data in it did NOT support the author's conclusions.



Put simply, the china study and the conclusions derived from it are [pseudoscience](#).

Read these excellent articles for critiques of the china study:

- [Denise Minger – The China Study: Fact or Fallacy?](#)
- [Chris Masterjohn – What Dr. Campbell Won't Tell You About The China Study](#)

Ethical? Maybe. Healthy? Not Really.

I applaud everyone who wants to eschew animal foods for ethical reasons.

I personally don't lose sleep over eating other living beings, but I prefer [my meat](#) to be properly raised and treated humanely.

But the evidence of health benefits for vegan diets is shaky at best and mostly based on cherry picking and selective citation of data.

Vegan diets may be healthier than the standard western diet, but pretty much **any diet** fits that description.

I'm sure that in the short term, people can see vast health benefits on a vegan diet, primarily by reducing their intake of toxic foods like [added sugars](#), refined grains, trans fats and high-Omega-6 vegetable oils.

But I am **100% certain** that a plant-based diet that includes at least some animal foods would be much, much healthier than a diet that contains none.

Just in the same way as a very low-carb diet based strictly on animal foods would be much healthier if it contained at least a little bit of plants.

Humans are omnivores. We need **both** animals and plants.

If You Choose to go Vegan, Make Sure to Get All The Nutrients You Need

Every person has the right to decide what they want to eat.

If you choose to go vegan, make sure to be prudent about your diet and getting all the nutrients that you need. Supplement if you must.

Read books by some of the vegan docs, even though they're biased against low-carb then I'm sure they at least know how to safely apply a vegan diet.

At the end of the day, there is no one right way to eat. Some people thrive on a low-carb diet that includes animal foods, others may do fine on a vegan diet.

I'm going to continue eating my low-carb, real-food based diet knowing that all the available evidence shows that such a diet is at least healthier than the diets it is compared to, and that



includes vegetarian and vegan diets.

Different strokes for different folks!