



The Atkins Diet: Everything You Need to Know (Literally)

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The Atkins diet is a low-carbohydrate diet, usually recommended for [weight loss](#).

Proponents of this diet claim that you can lose weight eating as much protein and fat as you want, as long as you avoid foods high in carbs.

In the past 12 years, [over 20 studies](#) have shown that low-carb diets are effective for weight loss (without calorie counting), and can lead to various health improvements.



The Atkins diet was originally promoted by a physician named [Dr. Robert C. Atkins](#), who wrote a best-selling book about the diet in 1972.

Since then, the Atkins diet has been popular all over the world and many more books have been written about it.

The diet was originally considered unhealthy and demonized by the mainstream health authorities, mostly due to the high [saturated fat](#) content. However, new studies have shown that saturated fat is harmless ([1](#), [2](#)).

Since then, the diet has been studied thoroughly and shown to lead to more weight loss than low-fat diets, and greater improvements in blood sugar, HDL (the “good” cholesterol), triglycerides and other health markers (3, 4).

Despite being high in fat, it does not raise LDL (the “bad”) cholesterol on average, although this does happen in a [subset of individuals](#) (5).

The main reason low-carb diets are so effective for weight loss, is that when people reduce carbohydrate intake and eat more protein, their appetite goes down and they end up automatically eating [fewer calories](#) without having to think about it (6, 7).

You can read more about the health benefits of low-carb diets [in this article](#).

The Atkins Diet is a 4-Phase Plan



The Atkins diet is split into 4 different phases:

1. **Phase 1 (Induction):** Under 20 [grams of carbs](#) per day for 2 weeks. Eat high-fat, high-protein, with low-carb vegetables like leafy greens. This kick-starts the weight loss.
2. **Phase 2 (Balancing):** Slowly add more nuts, low-carb vegetables and small amounts of fruit back to your diet.
3. **Phase 3 (Fine-Tuning):** When you are very close to your goal weight, add more carbs to your diet until weight loss slows down.
4. **Phase 4 (Maintenance):** Here you can eat as many healthy carbs as your body can tolerate without regaining weight.

However, these phases are a bit complicated and may not be necessary. You should be able to lose weight and keep it off as long as you stick to the meal plan below.

Some people choose to skip the induction phase altogether and include plenty of vegetables and [fruit](#) from the start. This approach can be very effective as well.

Others prefer to just stay in the induction phase indefinitely. This is also known as a [very low-carb ketogenic diet](#) (keto).

Foods to Avoid

You should avoid these foods on the Atkins diet:

- **Sugar:** [Soft drinks](#), [fruit juices](#), cakes, candy, ice cream, etc.
- **Grains:** Wheat, spelt, rye, barley, rice.
- **Vegetable Oils:** Soybean oil, corn oil, cottonseed oil, [canola oil](#) and a few others.
- **Trans Fats:** Usually found in processed foods with the word “hydrogenated” on the ingredients list.
- **“Diet” and “Low-Fat” Foods:** These are usually very high in [sugar](#).
- **High-Carb Vegetables:** Carrots, turnips, etc (induction only).
- **High-Carb Fruits:** [Bananas](#), [apples](#), [oranges](#), pears, grapes (induction only).
- **Starches:** Potatoes, sweet potatoes (induction only).
- **Legumes:** Lentils, beans, chickpeas, etc (induction only).



Foods to Eat

You should base your diet around these healthy foods.



- **Meats:** Beef, pork, lamb, chicken, [bacon](#) and others.
- **Fatty Fish and Seafood:** Salmon, trout, sardines, etc.

- **Eggs:** The healthiest eggs are Omega-3 enriched or [pastured](#).
- **Low-Carb Vegetables:** [Kale](#), spinach, broccoli, asparagus and others.
- **Full-Fat Dairy:** [Butter](#), cheese, cream, full-fat [yoghurt](#).
- **Nuts and Seeds:** Almonds, macadamia nuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds, etc.
- **Healthy Fats:** Extra virgin olive oil, coconut oil, [avocados](#) and avocado oil.

As long as you base your meals around a fatty [protein](#) source with vegetables or nuts and some healthy fats, then you will lose weight. It's that simple.

After Induction is Over, You Can Slowly Add Back Healthier Carbs

Despite what you may have heard, the Atkins diet is actually quite flexible.

It is only during the 2-week induction phase that you need to minimize your intake of healthier carb sources.

After induction is over, you can slowly add back healthier carbs such as higher carb vegetables, fruits, berries, potatoes, legumes and healthier grains like oats and rice.

However, chances are that you will need to stay moderately low-carb for life, even if you reach your weight loss goals.

If you start eating the same old foods again in the same amounts as before, you will gain back the weight. This is true of any weight loss diet.



Maybe Eat

There are many delicious foods you can eat on the Atkins diet.

This includes foods like bacon, heavy cream, cheese and [dark chocolate](#).

Many of these are generally considered fattening because of the high fat and calorie content.

However, when you're on a [low-carb diet](#), fat becomes your body's *preferred* energy source, making these foods perfectly acceptable.

More details here: [6 Indulgent Foods That Are Low-Carb Friendly](#).



Drink

Here are some drinks that are acceptable on the Atkins diet.



- **Water:** As always, [water](#) should be your go-to beverage.
- **Coffee:** Despite what you may have heard, [coffee](#) is high in antioxidants and actually quite healthy.
- **Green Tea:** A very healthy beverage.

Alcohol is also fine in small amounts. Stick to dry wines with no added sugars, and avoid high-carb drinks like beer.

What About Vegetarians?

It is possible to do the Atkins diet as a vegetarian (and even [vegan](#)), but difficult.

You can use [soy](#)-based foods for protein and eat plenty of nuts and seeds. Olive oil and [coconut oil](#) are excellent plant-based fat sources.

Lacto-ovo-vegetarians can also eat eggs, cheese, butter, heavy cream and other high-fat [dairy](#) foods.



A Sample Atkins Menu For One Week

This is a sample menu for one week on the Atkins diet.

It is suitable for the induction phase, but you should add more higher-carb vegetables and some

fruits as you move on to the other phases.

Monday

- **Breakfast:** Eggs and vegetables, fried in coconut oil.
- **Lunch:** Chicken salad with olive oil, and a handful of nuts.
- **Dinner:** Steak and veggies.

Tuesday

- **Breakfast:** Bacon and eggs.
- **Lunch:** Leftover chicken and veggies from the night before.
- **Dinner:** Cheeseburger (without the bun), with vegetables and butter.

Wednesday

- **Breakfast:** Omelet with veggies, fried in butter.
- **Lunch:** Shrimp salad with some olive oil.
- **Dinner:** Ground beef stir fry, with veggies.

Thursday

- **Breakfast:** Eggs and veggies, fried in coconut oil.
- **Lunch:** Leftover stir fry from dinner the night before.
- **Dinner:** Salmon with butter and vegetables.

Friday

- **Breakfast:** Bacon and eggs.
- **Lunch:** Chicken salad with olive oil and a handful of nuts.
- **Dinner:** Meatballs with vegetables.

Saturday

- **Breakfast:** Omelet with various vegetables, fried in butter.
- **Lunch:** Leftover meatballs from the night before.
- **Dinner:** Pork chops with vegetables.

Sunday

- **Breakfast:** Bacon and eggs.
- **Lunch:** Leftover pork chops from the night before.
- **Dinner:** Grilled chicken wings, with some salsa and veggies.

Make sure to include a variety of different vegetables in your diet.

A few examples of healthy and super satisfying low-carb meals: [7 Healthy Low-Carb Meals in Under 10 Minutes](#).



Healthy Low-Carb Snacks

Most people feel that their appetite goes down on the Atkins diet.

They tend to feel more than satisfied with 3 meals per day (sometimes only 2).

However, if you feel hungry between meals, then here are a few quick snacks:

- Leftovers.
- A hard-boiled egg or two.
- A piece of cheese.
- A piece of meat.
- A handful of nuts.
- Some greek yogurt.
- Berries and whipped cream.
- Baby carrots (careful during induction).
- Fruits (after induction).



How to Follow The Atkins Diet When Eating Out



It is actually very easy to follow the Atkins diet at most restaurants.

1. Get extra vegetables instead of bread, potatoes or rice.
2. Order a meal based on [fatty meat](#) or fatty fish.
3. Get some extra sauce, butter or olive oil with your meal.

A Simple Shopping List For The Atkins Diet

It is a good rule to shop at the perimeter of the store. This is usually where the whole foods are found.

Eating organic is not necessary, but always go for the *least* processed option that fits into your price range.

- Meats: Beef, chicken, lamb, pork, bacon.
- Fatty Fish: Salmon, trout, etc.
- Shrimp and shellfish.
- [Eggs](#).
- Dairy: Greek yogurt, heavy cream, butter, cheese.
- Vegetables: Spinach, kale, lettuce, tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, onions, etc.
- Berries: Blueberries, strawberries, etc.
- Nuts: Almonds, macadamia nuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, etc.
- Seeds: Sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, etc.
- Fruits: Apples, pears, oranges.
- Coconut oil.
- Olives.
- [Extra virgin olive oil](#).
- Dark chocolate.
- Avocados.
- Condiments: [Sea salt](#), pepper, [turmeric](#), cinnamon, [garlic](#), parsley, etc.



It is highly recommended to clear your pantry of all unhealthy foods and ingredients. This includes ice cream, sodas, breakfast cereals, breads, juices and baking ingredients like sugar and wheat flour.

You Won't Be Disappointed

If you're serious about the Atkins diet, I recommend you get one of the Atkins books and simply get started as soon as possible.

That being said, the detailed guide in this article should contain everything you need to succeed. To create a printable version, [click here](#).

You can find a whole ton of healthy low-carb recipes on this page: [101 Healthy Low-Carb Recipes That Taste Incredible](#)

Here are a few more useful and informative articles about low-carb diets:

- [10 Proven Health Benefits of Low-Carb and Ketogenic Diets](#)
- [How Many Carbs Should You Eat Per Day to Lose Weight?](#)
- [10 Common Myths About Low-Carb Diets](#)
- [Can You Eat Fruit on a Low-Carb Diet? It Depends](#)
- [18 Delicious Low-Carb Breakfast Recipes](#)

- [Low-Carb Diets – Healthy, but Hard to Stick to?](#)
- [23 Studies on Low-Carb and Low-Fat Diets](#) (show this one to your doctor or skeptic friend).

You can find a longer list of articles on [this page](#).

At the end of the day, the Atkins diet is a very healthy and effective way to lose weight. You won't be disappointed.