

# Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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## The Guide to Healthy Eating



**Lower blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar; reach a healthy weight; and stay healthy by following 4 simple rules while still eating the foods you love.**

What should I eat to get and stay healthy? That's the million-dollar question and the more we hear about different diets, or which foods are good or bad for us, the more complicated the answer seems to become. But a combination of common sense, my education in holistic healing and nutritional science, and experience with my patients has taught me that a healthy diet must follow a few basic rules. Equally important, it needs to be tailored to suit your individual tastes and lifestyle.

By "diet," I don't mean following a prescribed, rigid menu and continually depriving yourself of your favorite foods. You might be able to do that for a few days, weeks, or even months, but not for the rest of your life. That's why virtually any weight-loss diet can work in the short term, but the weight is usually regained.

My aim is to help you learn how to use food, from this point forward, to continually enhance your health

and ability to do everything you want to do. A way of eating that helps you do that will be your best diet. The benefits include stable energy, better sleep, a better memory, improved digestion, a healthier weight, and lower odds of suffering from all of today's chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and dementia.

### The Big Problem

In recent decades, most of our food has become processed. It's been turned into a packaged commodity that is designed to be manufactured on a large scale, to have a long shelf life, and to be profitable. Compared to fresh foods, processed versions deliver abnormal quantities of carbs, in the form of sugar and starch, but little fiber and nutrients.

As a result, this country has the worst nutrition of all the world's rich nations. Our life expectancy at birth is lower than that of Europe, Canada, and Japan, even though we pay more

than twice as much for healthcare.<sup>1</sup>

Before agriculture was industrialized and food became a packaged commodity, our ancestors ate better food and rarely suffered from today's common degenerative diseases. But you might be wondering, don't we live longer today? A superficial look at the statistics says yes, but that's not the whole story.

Before the invention of antibiotics, infections killed many children. For example, between 1500 and 1800, nearly one in three children died before the age of 5 from infectious diseases such as the flu, dysentery, scarlet fever, and pneumonia. But here's a surprising twist: In Victorian times, between 1840 and 1880, those who survived past age 5 lived as long we do, or longer, with only one-tenth of our chronic diseases.<sup>2</sup> And their food provided ten times the amount of nutrients that our usual food provides today.

Most statistics that measure lifespan don't take into account the killer infections in the pre-antibiotic era. Consequently, the true power of real, fresh food is underestimated.

Which Diet Is Best?

Diets of different cultures around the world have varied a great deal throughout human history. Some have been high-fat while others were high-carb or high-protein. Some cultures ate a lot of fruit or grain while others ate little or none. And they all survived, or we wouldn't be here.

Before industrialization and worldwide transportation, diets depended on which foods were available close to home. People

intuitively prepared those foods in nourishing ways — that was their best diet.

Despite differences, the diets of earlier cultures shared a common characteristic: They contained no processed foods — no added sugar, high fructose corn syrup, white flour, or chemicals such as pesticides and artificial

preservatives, flavors, and colors.

Processed foods in supermarkets are so common today that it's easy to overlook the fact that your body wasn't designed to eat them. And it's difficult, at first, to replace these foods with fresh versions.

Fast-food restaurants present another challenge. Subtract the bread and fries and what's left is not that

### How Carb Overload Harms Your Health

A high-carb diet can literally shorten your life. A study of more than 135,000 people, in 18 countries (including the United States), found that those who ate the most carbs were 28 percent more likely to die prematurely. In contrast, those who ate high-fat diets were 23 percent less likely to die prematurely. People eating the most saturated fat were 21 percent less likely to have a stroke.<sup>3</sup>

The chief sources of carb overload, such as grains and sugary foods, raise levels of insulin. Most often discussed in connection with diabetes, the hormone has much broader effects on your health. This is how problems develop:

- Carbs raise levels of glucose, a form of sugar, in the blood.
- Your body secretes insulin to get the glucose out of the blood and into cells, where it can be used as fuel.
- If you keep overloading on carbs, more and more insulin needs to be secreted to keep up with demand.
- After a while, your body anticipates a lot of carbs and keeps producing more and more insulin.
- Eventually, insulin levels become chronically elevated.

At first, the increase in insulin level is slight and wouldn't be diagnosed as a health hazard by regular medical check-ups. (My earlier newsletter, Volume 1 Issue 3, describes which tests can be done by any doctor to detect the problem in its early stages.) Over time, as levels keep rising, studies have found that elevated insulin drives or contributes to these conditions:

|                            |                                    |                                  |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| High blood pressure        | Weight gain                        | Parkinson's disease <sup>8</sup> |
| High cholesterol           | Diabetes <sup>5</sup>              | Osteoarthritis <sup>9</sup>      |
| High triglycerides         | Memory problems                    | Migraine <sup>10</sup>           |
| Coronary artery disease    | Faster mental decline <sup>6</sup> | Cancer <sup>11</sup>             |
| Heart attacks <sup>4</sup> | Alzheimer's disease <sup>7</sup>   |                                  |

It may be hard to believe that overloading on carbohydrates can influence health in so many ways, but that's the evidence. All the mechanisms of elevated insulin are not yet fully understood, but it's known that it affects many internal processes, including raising levels of chronic inflammation. In the case of osteoarthritis, for example, it contributes to discomfort and pain by raising inflammation in the fluid that cushions joints. And, inflammation is known to be an underlying or contributing factor in all chronic diseases.

much food. Without a giant bun, a big sandwich becomes a few slices of cold cuts, tomato, and one or two lettuce leaves, and a big burger turns into a little patty of ground beef — they don't look like good value and they won't fill you up.

I've found that it really helps to understand just how unnatural it is to eat industrial food products, rather than real plant and animal foods. Once you truly see and experience the difference, making healthy choices can become second nature.

## Today's Underlying Diet Problem

The American diet veered badly off the rails with the introduction of low-fat foods. It's now being recognized that the fat was never a problem, but it was replaced with large quantities of sugar and starch — unhealthy carbs that have been causing real harm.

A 15-year study by the Harvard School of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the more added sugar in someone's diet, the more likely they are to die prematurely.<sup>12</sup>

Researchers looked at diets of nearly 12,000 Americans and found that sugar made up one-quarter of calories for 10 percent of them. In this group, risk of heart disease more than doubled, compared to people consuming less than 10 percent of their calories from added sugar. Top sugar sources include sodas, energy drinks, and sports drinks.

Refined carbohydrates, such as white flour, are equally problematic because they act the same way as white sugar in your body. Sources

include most popular foods of the last few decades — burger buns and fries, pizza, starchy and sugary snacks, sugary cereals, deep-fried and breaded fish or chicken, sandwiches on giant rolls, platefuls of pasta, many "healthy" nutrition bars, and desserts.

If you ate a small amount of one of these, occasionally, it probably wouldn't derail your health. But when eaten often, these carbs are the dietary driver of our leading health problems, from obesity and diabetes to heart disease and dementia.

When I talk about carbs in this context, I'm referring to the types of processed foods I listed above. All carbs are not created equal. Plant foods in their natural state contain carbs. However, they're also vital sources of fiber and nutrients, which prevent and help to reverse damage, rather than causing it.

## What to Eat

For the past 15 years, I've been helping my patients discover ways to eat in a way that satisfies both their taste buds and their body's need for good health. I've found that in addition to being overloaded with unhealthy carbs, most diets are lacking two types of food: non-starchy vegetables and healthy fat.

The key is to replace much of the starch and sugar with non-starchy vegetables and fat. The veggies provide vital nutrients, fiber, and volume in your stomach, so they will fill you up. Healthy fat, such as olive oil and avocado, is nutritious and will keep you satisfied because it takes longer to digest than protein and carbs.

## How to Control Carbs

I don't believe in measuring all the food you eat or counting every calorie or gram. But unhealthy carbs have to be controlled. To accomplish this, I developed a simple way to count only the carbs that are the main sources of overload. These are the foods most people overeat. They're abundant in packaged foods in the supermarket and in most restaurant foods.

This means you don't have to count carbs in all foods — only

Dr. Marlene's

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in the ones in the chart on this page. These boil down to foods made with grains or corn, sweet foods and beverages, beans, and fruit. Through all my years of experience, I've found that if you limit your daily total carbs from only these foods to 60 grams, weight drops, blood pressure and cholesterol drop, blood sugar and insulin drop, and health improves. In any one meal or snack, don't eat more than 30 grams of carbs from the foods on the list.

When I mention total carbs in these foods, I'm literally referring to "total carbohydrates" on a food label. Some foods also list "net carbohydrates," which is total carbs minus fiber. In theory, the fiber blocks the effect of some of the carbs, but it doesn't always work this way in practice. Counting net carbs can sabotage your efforts.

## The Best Sweeteners

I'm often asked if honey, agave syrup, coconut sugar, date sugar, maple syrup, or other natural sweeteners count the same way as white sugar. They do. You need to count the total carbohydrates in all these. However, you can use stevia or xylitol, natural sweeteners that don't have a harmful effect on blood sugar and insulin, without counting their carb content.

## Eat Every 3 Hours

Years of eating a high-carb diet leads to unstable blood sugar and cravings for sugar and starch, making hunger difficult to control. Once hunger strikes, it's all too easy to grab whatever food might be within easy reach, even if it isn't the best choice.

# 4 Simple Healthy Diet Rules

There's no need to eliminate any category of food, or to count calories or grams of protein or fat. Just follow these 4 rules.

**1. Count total carbohydrates ONLY IN FOODS ON THIS LIST and eat only 60 grams of carbs per day from these foods.** These are the main sources of excess carbs that damage your health and they are the only carbs you need to count. **If a food is not on this list, there's no need to count its carb content.** This is not a list of bad foods, just a list of carb-dense foods that need to be controlled.

## FOODS MADE WITH GRAINS

|          |                   |                          |
|----------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Oatmeal  | Other cereals     | Bread                    |
| Crackers | Pastries          | Cookies                  |
| Cakes    | Other baked goods | Snack and breakfast bars |
| Pasta    | Rice              |                          |

## SNACKS

|       |       |          |
|-------|-------|----------|
| Candy | Chips | Pretzels |
|-------|-------|----------|

## DRINKS THAT CONTAIN SUGAR

|  |                         |  |
|--|-------------------------|--|
| Sodas                                    | Energy drinks           | Drinks with agave nectar or other natural sweeteners except stevia or xylitol (see <i>The Best Sweeteners</i> on the left) |
| Milk (contains lactose, a natural sugar) | Sweetened tea or coffee |  |
| Wine                                     | Beer                    | Other alcoholic drinks   |

## STARCHY VEGETABLES AND LEGUMES

|          |                |         |
|----------|----------------|---------|
| Potatoes | Sweet potatoes | Beans   |
| Peas     | Corn           | Popcorn |

## FRUIT

|                                       |              |                 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Fresh, frozen, dried, or canned fruit | Fruit juices | Fruit smoothies |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|

**2. Limit total carbs from the above list to no more than 30 grams at one time** — meaning in a single meal or snack. Otherwise, a sudden glut of carbs will provoke fat storage. If you really want to have a soda, for example, make sure the amount you drink at one time, plus any other food from the list above, stays below 30 grams of carbs.

**3. Eat every three hours or before you're hungry.** As your system improves, you can increase the time or skip the snacks. Eating often will prevent sugar cravings and energy dips. If you get hungry or tired during the day, it's often because you should have eaten something earlier.

**4. Eat some fat with every meal and snack.** By eating some fat, you will feel satiated and your blood sugar and energy levels will be stable. For example, dip veggies in ranch dressing or hummus when having a snack. Do not eat any foods labeled "low fat" or "fat free."

## How to Keep Track of Carbs

Use a website like [www.carbmanager.com](http://www.carbmanager.com) or [www.myfitnesspal.com](http://www.myfitnesspal.com), or apps from these sites. Be sure to note the serving size and how many servings you eat.

By eating every three hours, or before you get hungry, it's easier to stay in control and make smarter choices. If you can't go for three hours without cravings or hunger, eat more often. As you follow these principles and your metabolism improves, you probably won't need to eat as often.

Meanwhile, don't try to be heroic and skip snacks or meals, as it will work against you. If you aren't very hungry when it's time for a meal or snack, eat a small amount, but do eat.

### Always Eat Some Fat

Include some fat with each meal or snack. This may seem strange, especially if you're used to sugary cereal and low-fat or non-fat milk for breakfast. We've been led to believe that this is a healthy breakfast, but it isn't. The sugar content is off the charts. In addition to added sugar, the grain in most cereals is chiefly starch, which acts the same way as table sugar in your body. And the milk is also high in a different type of sugar.

All milk naturally contains lactose, a form of sugar. In whole milk, its effect is somewhat balanced by the fat content of the milk. The fat slows the digestion of the lactose, so that it doesn't raise levels of blood sugar as rapidly or as much. When fat is removed from milk, you get a more dramatic, damaging effect.

The combination of sugary cereal and low- or non-fat milk is a perfect storm that sets you up for sugar cravings. Adding a glass of orange juice, which has almost as many carbs as a soda, makes things even worse. With or without the juice, such a breakfast is followed

by a spike and then a crash in levels of blood sugar and energy, leaving you craving something sweet or starchy by mid-morning.

If you added some fat to that breakfast, it would give you more stable energy. But a better breakfast would be naturally low in carbs, would contain some healthy fat, and would be much more effective in satisfying you and providing stable energy for a longer period. Eggs, or sausage, and non-starchy vegetables (not potatoes) are good combinations.

### Beware of Too Much Protein

Lack of protein is not the problem for most people. However, if you increase your protein, instead of veggies, it can contribute to weight gain, constipation, and health problems in the longer term.

Protein is essential for continually rebuilding and repairing all the tissues in your

body and is not usually used as an energy source. But if you eat too much of it, it will lead to weight gain or prevent weight loss. With large quantities of protein, an overload can raise levels of blood sugar and insulin, much like carbs.

Substituting protein for carbs is a major reason why some low-carb diets have been unhealthy or unsustainable. I find that for some people, it's the first thing they want to increase when reducing carbs, and it's often easier to do. For example, you can easily ask for extra burger patties when buying fast food, but you may not be able to get extra servings of several different vegetables. But don't fall into this trap. Too much protein isn't healthy.

### Prepare Food at Home

As a rule, it's better to prepare food at home than buying take-out or eating out. This holds true even

#### About Dr. Marlene

Dr. Marlene Merritt's passion for natural medicine is fueled by her drive to help others, and her own experience of overcoming a debilitating heart condition, diagnosed at the age of 20. A competitive cross-country cyclist at the time, she suddenly began experiencing severe chest pains. Forced to quit the sport, she suffered from extreme fatigue and constant pain for another 15 years, despite doing everything that conventional, Western medical doctors told her to do.

And then, the tide turned. A physician trained in naturopathic healing recommended a whole-food vitamin E supplement. A week after starting the supplement regimen, her energy began to return, and the pain began to disappear.

Dr. Marlene is a Doctor of Oriental Medicine, has a Master's in Nutrition, and is an Applied Clinical Nutritionist. She is Board Certified in Bariatric Counseling, and certified in the Bredesen MEND Protocol,<sup>TM</sup> a groundbreaking method of reversing Alzheimer's disease. She sees patients at the Merritt Wellness Centers in Austin, Texas, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, trains health practitioners nationwide, and is the author of *Smart Blood Sugar* and *The Blood Pressure Solution*.



## Carb Content of Foods to Watch

These are some examples of approximate carb content in foods that can cause a carb overload, listed on page 4. Always check labels for “total carbohydrates,” as amounts vary from one product to another.

Each of these contains **15 grams of carbs** in the serving size listed, which is often much less than is typically eaten at one time.

- 1 slice of bread
- ½ cup cereal
- ⅓ cup cooked pasta or rice
- ½ a hot dog or burger bun
- 1 pancake or waffle
- 1 tortilla, 6-inch
- ½ English muffin
- ⅓ cup baked beans
- ½ cup corn or peas
- 10-15 fries
- 1 small baked potato
- 10 ounces milk (any fat content)
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 4 cups popcorn
- 1 ounce chips
- 8 animal crackers

Pizza: 1 slice usually contains about 30 grams of carbs.

Sandwiches: 2 slices of bread would contain about 30 grams of carbs. Large rolls may contain more.

**Many drinks are sources of carb overload. For example:**

Soda: 39 grams in 12 ounces

Orange juice: 26 grams in 8 ounces

Energy drinks: 28 grams in 8.4 ounces

Frappuccino: 50 grams in 8 ounces

Milk: 11 grams in 8 ounces

Black coffee and tea contain zero carbs, but milky and/or sugary additions add plenty of carbs.

if you just assemble pre-cut veggies and cold cuts, instead of buying a similar combination that’s put together in a restaurant or store.

Here’s an example of why an at-home version can be better: Let’s say you buy a pre-packaged salad bowl. It’s loaded with lettuce — maybe a couple slices of tomato and a few shreds of carrots — and topped with some chicken. Those veggies won’t fill you up or provide enough fat.

If you make your own salad, you can add more veggies, such as chopped sweet peppers, raw or cooked broccoli or cauliflower, more tomato, and/or more carrots. You choose, but the idea is to eat much more vegetables than the lettuce, because the extra veggies are essential to make that low-carb meal satisfying. You probably know that by themselves, leafy greens won’t fill you up for long. Adding some avocado will give you healthy fat, improve the taste, and keep you more satisfied.

And then there’s the dressing that comes with a prepackaged salad bowl. Quite likely, it’s made with unhealthy oils and may well contain sugar or high fructose corn syrup. Low-fat dressings are the worst because sugar is added to compensate for the missing fat. At home, you can use a healthier, olive oil-based dressing.

Bottom line, a simple salad with some cold chicken can vary quite a bit. The kind of salad I recommend can be tasty and very satisfying without the added carbs, and it will give you stable energy.

## Be Selective in Restaurants

When you’re used to preparing naturally low-carb food at home,

it’s easier to recognize healthy dishes when you eat out, and easier to tailor a meal to your personal needs. For example, if a bread bowl is too tempting, ask for it to be removed. For appetizers, look for ones that aren’t breaded or deep fried. And if a dish comes with rice or potatoes, ask for vegetables instead.

Most restaurants will gladly oblige. On the other hand, if a menu has only high-carb options, it’s time to look for a new place to dine out.

## Where to Start

The prospect of making these changes can be daunting, but you don’t have to do it all at once. You can take baby steps. The next few pages explain how.

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# What to Eat

Potatoes are the most popular vegetable in this country. We eat an average of 45 pounds of them, per person, per year. Tomatoes rank second, at 30 pounds per person per year, but they're eaten mostly in pizza and pasta sauces — along with popular sources of starch, which your body breaks down into sugar.

It's time for a change — eat more vegetables that aren't starchy. There are plenty to choose from and a variety will make your diet more appealing and nutritious. The other under-eaten type of food is healthy fat. Good sources are listed below.

Non-starchy vegetables and healthy fats should replace much of the carbs in your diet. The list in *4 Simple Healthy Diet Rules* on page 4 told you what not to eat. Below are things you *should* eat — a lot, in the case of veggies and fats.

## Unlimited Vegetables

Eat at least 5 servings daily of non-starchy vegetables. More is better.

### 1 Serving:

1 cup raw vegetables or ½ cup cooked vegetables

The list below includes 45 non-starchy vegetables. Eat as many of these as you like.



|                    |                            |             |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| Alfalfa sprouts    | Collard greens             | Peppers,    |
| Artichoke          | Cucumber                   | all types   |
| Artichoke hearts   | Eggplant                   | Radishes    |
| Arugula            | Endive                     | Romaine     |
| Asparagus          | Escarole                   | Rutabaga    |
| Bean sprouts       | Green onions/<br>scallions | Snow peas   |
| Beet greens        | Jicama                     | Spinach     |
| Beets              | Kale                       | Summer      |
| Broccoli           | Kohlrabi                   | squash      |
| Brussels sprouts   | Leeks                      | Swiss chard |
| Cabbage            | Lettuce                    | Tomato      |
| Carrots            | Mushrooms                  | Turnips     |
| Cauliflower        | Mustard greens             | Water       |
| Celery             | Okra                       | chestnuts   |
| Chicory            | Onions                     | Watercress  |
| Chinese<br>cabbage | Parsley                    | Zucchini    |

## Healthy Fats

Healthy fat should be part of every meal and snack, to prevent hunger pangs and sugar cravings. Sources of healthy fats include meat (grass-fed is best), poultry, fish, eggs, avocado, olives, seeds, nuts, extra virgin olive oil, coconut oil, butter, and full-fat cheese, cream, and milk. Some fat from meat and poultry is good for you, including different parts of chicken with the skin.

If you don't tolerate dairy, don't eat it. Otherwise, eat only full-fat dairy, whether it's milk, cheese, or yogurt.

## Nuts: Beware the Pitfall

Nuts contain healthy fat and some protein, and they are low in carbs. They make a good snack with one word of warning: It's easy to eat too many.

Studies have found that five servings of nuts per week were associated with better heart health. One serving was an ounce. This is how many nuts are in a 1-ounce serving:

|                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Almonds: 24               | Macadamia nuts: 12 |
| Cashews, medium: 18       | Peanuts: 35        |
| Hazelnuts or filberts: 12 | Pecan halves: 15   |
| Brazil nuts, medium: 8    | Walnut halves: 14  |

## Protein

Most people eat adequate protein. When you reduce carbs, don't compensate by eating more protein. Eat more veggies and fat and eat only your usual amount of protein.

## Produce Shopping Tips

Buy precut veggies whenever possible and look for good quality. Chances are, some of your local stores carry fresher, more flavorful veggies than others, and farmers' markets may be a good option. Experiment and find your best sources.

Some veggies and fruits contain more pesticide residues than others, and you can't eliminate the chemicals by washing or cooking. Try to buy organic versions of these, which contain the highest levels of pesticides: strawberries, spinach, nectarines, apples, grapes, peaches, cherries, pears, tomatoes, celery, potatoes, and sweet bell peppers. There's more information about toxins in my earlier newsletter — Volume 1 Issue 7. You can also check pesticide levels with a free app from [www.ewg.org/apps](http://www.ewg.org/apps).

# How to Transition into Your Healthy Diet

You're embarking on a journey to transform the way you eat, to restore and maintain good health. Few people can suddenly make sweeping changes and stick with them so below, I describe good, better, and best choices for meals and snacks. I'm giving these as examples, not as a rigid menu you must follow, because you have a unique set of taste buds and your own life. What works for someone else may not work for you.

In the examples below, I haven't included the foods in which you need to count carbs, such as starchy vegetables, pasta, rice, bread, fruit, and desserts, because most people find it all too easy to eat those. You can add them wherever you prefer.

In changing your diet, I suggest taking baby steps. Do the best you can and gradually improve your choices.

## Breakfast

### Instead of skipping breakfast or having toast or cereal:

**Good:** Eat a scoop of peanut or almond butter before heading out the door and/or add coconut oil to a cup of hot black coffee. Start with a teaspoon of coconut oil and work up to a tablespoon. If you mix it well enough, whisk it, or put it in a shaker and give it a good shake, your coffee will develop a nice, frothy consistency.

**Better:** Mix water with a protein powder that's designed to be a meal replacement, like Primal Health's Smash It! If you like, add a bit of full-fat milk. Or, keep a few hard-boiled eggs in the fridge and have one or two with a bit of sea salt and pepper. Eating leftover meat or fish and vegetables from yesterday's dinner is another option. It may seem odd if you've never tried it, but it works.

**Best:** Sit down to a freshly made breakfast meal that includes vegetables, protein, and healthy fat. Here's one that's quick and easy to prepare: Put a handful of raw spinach on your plate. Scramble some eggs and put the hot eggs on top of the spinach. Heat from the eggs will wilt the spinach, almost like an omelet, but



it takes less time to prepare than a traditional omelet. If you don't like eggs or don't react well to them, substitute sausages.

If you have more time, sauté onions, spinach, or other vegetables and eat them with eggs, done the way you like. Use butter, coconut oil, or olive oil in the frying pan. Bacon or sausages with vegetables are other options, and parsley and other herbs can add flavor. There are many variations, but the main point is that breakfast should include vegetables and healthy fat instead of toast or cereal.

## How Much Protein Should I Eat?

The general recommendation for adults who aren't exceptionally active is 0.36 grams of protein daily per pound of body weight. For example, if you weigh 150 pounds, that's 54 grams per day ( $150 \times 0.36$ ), or 72 grams if you weigh 200 pounds ( $200 \times 0.36$ ).

Most of us eat more than enough protein. Keep in mind that protein is in most foods, not only in meat and seafood. I recommend eating some meals without meat or fish.

## Lunch

### Instead of a sandwich and some chips:

**Good:** Buy a lunch that, instead of bread and chips, has a few different vegetables, raw or cooked, and some meat or fish. Chicken breast meat with a salad is a common combination and is good from a low-carb



standpoint but likely lacks enough fat. Avocado is a good addition.

**Better:** Prepare your own lunch. Instead of making a sandwich with tuna or chicken salad, or cold cuts, skip the bread and wrap the meat in lettuce leaves, with some mayo, and eat it with several pre-cut veggies. Dip the veggies in a bottled dressing made with olive oil, without added sugar or high fructose corn syrup.

**Best:** Take 30 to 60 minutes for a relaxed, sit-down lunch that's freshly cooked and includes several different veggies and fatty fish or a piece of chicken or meat and some avocado.

## Dinner

If you've been following my suggestions during the day, you won't be ravenous at dinnertime and may or may not want a big meal. Either way, instead of a plateful of pasta or a rice-based dish:

**Good:** Pick up ready-made food or eat out but avoid too many carbs. Look for a big portion of non-starchy vegetables and meat or fish, rather than a dish with a large portion of pasta, rice, beans, or fries. You can't control the quality of fat used to cook the food, but this is a good option.

**Better:** If you aren't hungry enough for a large meal, heat up some organic soup. On the side, eat some raw or cooked, non-starchy veggies dipped in hummus or a dressing made with olive oil. If you prefer a larger meal, have some non-starchy veggies with a piece of meat or fish, which you could pick up from a supermarket take-out section. This is a meal assembled at home rather than being cooked from scratch, and you might eat it in front of the TV.

**Best:** With family or friends, sit down to a relaxed meal that's made from scratch, with fresh ingredients. It should include at least three different non-starchy vegetables and a fatty cut of meat or poultry, such as a chicken leg or thighs with the skin.

## Snacks

### Instead of waiting until you're hungry:

**Good:** Have a snack within three hours of your last meal, or before you get hungry. If you wait, you're more likely to overeat. If you snack on food that's on

the list of carbs to count (on page 4), such as pretzels, just keep track of the carbs. As a starting point, it's most important to just eat some type of snack — don't skip it.

**Better:** Have a snack that's low-carb and contains some fat, such as a scoop of almond butter, a piece of cheese or beef jerky, or a small handful of nuts.

**Best:** Eat some chopped veggies and some fat. Dip veggies in humus or ranch dressing or eat them with a spoonful of nut butter.

## Learn to Love Non-starchy Veggies



Vegetables that aren't starchy should be part of every meal and ideally, every snack, and your diet should include a variety. Here are some easy ways to make them taste great:

Sauté vegetables with butter, extra virgin olive oil, or coconut oil.

Steam them and once they're on your plate, drizzle a generous amount of extra virgin olive oil on top or add butter and lemon.

Always season veggies, at least with some sea salt. Add pepper and other spices and herbs as you prefer.

Steam a big batch at the beginning of the week and heat them up as needed, over the next few days.

### Salad Tips

There's a myth that all salads are healthy. They certainly can be but there are a couple of pitfalls: Not enough variety of veggies, and unhealthy salad dressing.

Don't use low-fat or non-fat dressings, because you need fat to absorb nutrients from your salad. For bottled dressings, look for extra virgin olive oil as the base with vinegar or lemon, plus herbs and spices. Avoid dressings with added sugar, artificial flavors, or preservatives.

To make your own dressing, combine extra virgin olive oil or avocado oil and lemon juice or vinegar of your choice. Use a ratio of 3 parts oil to 1 part vinegar or lemon juice. And always season with sea salt, pepper, and any other herbs or spices you enjoy.

Vegetables that are locally grown are likely to be more flavorful and nutritious. When it's practical, shop at farmers' markets for whatever is in-season in your area.

# Q&A

## Healthy Diet Questions Answered

These are some of the most common questions I get asked. Let me know if you have others.

**Q: Do I have to follow this diet forever?**

**A:** I designed this diet to repair the damage from years of carb overload. Once you've achieved a healthy weight and a healthier state, you may be able to include a bit more carbs in your diet. However, I've found that most people can't tolerate a lot more than what I'm recommending. If you add carbs and gain weight or don't feel as good, that's a sign to cut back. Your tolerance for carbs may increase a little if you significantly increase the amount of exercise in your life, but the difference would be slight. You can't outrun your fork.

**Q: Can I ever eat pasta, bread, fruit, and dessert?**

**A:** Yes, you can eat all these. Just count the total carbohydrates in each food and don't exceed 30 grams in one meal and 60 grams in a day, from these foods and others in the list on page 4. In other words, you can't eat unlimited amounts of these. For some people, cake or some other high-carb food can trigger uncontrollable cravings for more carbs. If that happens to you, I suggest avoiding that food for a few months. Then see if you can be satisfied with a small amount of it.

**Q: Can I drink diet soda?**

**A:** No. Although its carb content is low, artificial sweeteners in diet soda are toxic chemicals and

are likely to increase cravings for sweet foods. If you want to sweeten tea, coffee, or other drinks, I recommend stevia, a natural no-carb sweetener that won't cause problems.

**Q: Why can't I count net carbs?**

**A:** Net carbs are calculated by subtracting the fiber content of a food from the total carbs. For example, if there were 10 grams of total carbs and 4 grams of fiber, net carbs would be 6 grams (10 minus 4). In theory, the fiber is supposed to reduce the effect of the carbs, but I've found that this doesn't work in the real world. Sorry, carbs are carbs; count all of them in the foods listed on page 4.

**Q: Will this diet make me constipated?**

**A:** Not if you eat plenty of vegetables, as I recommend. In addition, drink lots of water and eat a tablespoon of sauerkraut each day to keep your gut bacteria balanced. Buy sauerkraut with live cultures, found in the refrigerated section in the supermarket. If you replace carbs with protein, which I caution against, you could get constipated because of lack of fiber in your diet.

**Q: What if I get tired or hungry?**

**A:** This shouldn't happen if you eat often enough, eat enough fat, and don't overdo carbs.

**Q: How is this different from a Paleo or keto diet?**

**A:** The Paleo diet excludes all grains, dairy, legumes (beans and peanuts), and refined sugar. This diet doesn't exclude any food. In the keto diet, the carbs are reduced to much lower levels than I recommend, and this often causes flu-like symptoms and bad breath in the first few weeks, which this diet does not do.

**Q: Can I eat canned or frozen vegetables?**

**A:** Frozen vegetables are fine. I don't recommend canned vegetables because the heat treatment during canning destroys nutrients, they may contain additives, and the linings of cans usually contain BPA, a toxic chemical.

**Q: Why don't you tell me exactly what I should eat for each meal and snack?**

**A:** Chances are, you wouldn't like everything I recommend, much of it wouldn't be practical in your daily routines, and you wouldn't be able to stick with such a diet in the long term. My aim is to help you develop and maintain a healthy way of eating that works for you. This way, you can eat for better health from this point forward, in a way that suits your personal preferences and life circumstances. Rather than following my menu, I want you to take charge.

**Do you have a question for Dr. Marlene?** Send your health-related questions to [drmarlene@naturalhealthconnections.com](mailto:drmarlene@naturalhealthconnections.com). Although she cannot answer each question directly, Dr. Marlene will address your concerns in this or other sections of the newsletter. Answers are intended for educational purposes only and should not be viewed as medical advice. If you need help with your subscription or have questions about Primal Health supplements, email [support@primalhealthlp.com](mailto:support@primalhealthlp.com) or call 877-300-7849.