

## Diet Choices

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About 45% of women and 30% of men in the USA are trying to lose weight. A high-carbohydrate, low-fat, low calorie diet has been the recommended diet of most medical providers.

A low-carbohydrate, high protein, high-fat diet, usually known as the Atkins Diet, has become increasingly popular among people trying to lose weight. Many best-selling diet books have promoted this approach. The Atkins Diet was originally published in 1973 and again in 1992 and 2002. More than 10 million copies of Atkins diet books have been sold. Until recently, there was no published study about the benefit of the Atkins diet. On May 22, 2003, two studies comparing low-carbohydrates and low-fat diets were published in the leading medical journal – The New England Journal of Medicine.

Both studies showed that people who followed low-carbohydrate (Atkins) diets have lost more weight than people who followed conventional (low-fat) diets. The low-carbohydrate diet was associated with a greater improvement in some risk factors for heart disease like triglycerides level and insulin resistance. But both studies concluded that these findings should be interpreted with caution because of the short duration of the studies (one was for only 6 months, and one was for one year). Longer and larger studies are needed to determine the long-term safety and benefit of low-carbohydrate, high-protein, high-fat diets.

So which diet should you follow? I always tell my patients that it is up to them to decide which diet they think they will be most successful following, as long as they have no diseases, like diabetes, that require special diets. Personally, until we get more studies about the Atkins Diet, I still prefer a low-fat, low calorie diet which has an established, long-term benefit and reduces the incidence of heart disease.