

LOW CARBOHYDRATE DIETS

What are low carbohydrate diets?

- Many cut out fruit, starchy vegetables (e.g. potatoes, kumara, taro), other vegetables with some carbohydrate (e.g. corn, carrots), bread, pasta, rice, milk and milk products, sugar.
- They promote meat, chicken, eggs, seafood, nuts and seeds. Some promote butter, cream and oils.

What's right about them?

- They remove high sugar foods from the diet, such as cakes, biscuits and fizzy drinks.
- Some people find these high protein diets more filling so they eat less.

What's wrong with them?

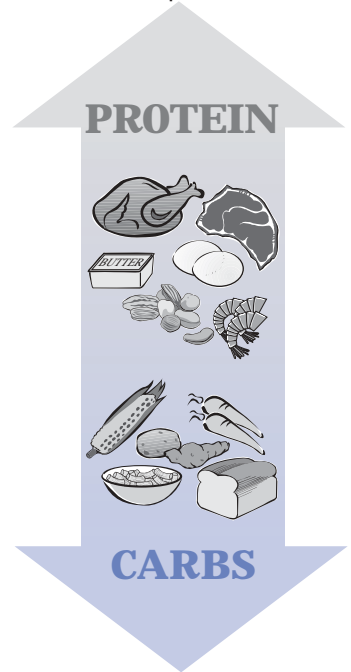
- They limit fruit and vegetables and high fibre starchy food which can lead to constipation.
- They can be high in saturated fat, which increases your risk of heart disease and stroke.
- They are low in some vitamins and minerals.

Who should avoid them?

- People with heart disease and diabetes.
- People below the age of 18.

How to safely use these diets

- Include plenty of colourful vegetables at most meals.
- Limit the use of added fat such as butter, cream and oil.
- Trim the fat from meat and the skin from chicken.
- To ensure your diet contains all essential nutrients it would also be very worthwhile to include some:
 - wholegrains (e.g. porridge, bran, wholegrain bread).
 - low fat milk and milk products.



What is the bottom line?

- Weight loss while following a low carbohydrate diet is due to eating fewer kilojoules, and the initial weight loss is due to fluid loss.
- The long term health effects from following this type of diet are not known.

**WHAT YOU DID AND DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT
TWO COMMON WEIGHT LOSS DIETS**

LOW GLYCAEMIC INDEX DIETS

What is the glycaemic index (GI)?

- GI is a measure of how much your blood sugar level increases after eating a carbohydrate containing food.

What are low GI diets?

- They promote foods such as wholegrain breads and breakfast cereals (e.g. porridge, bran), dried beans and lentils, and a range of vegetables and fruit.
- They restrict foods such as, white bread, bakery foods made from white flour, white rice, potatoes, kumara.

What's right about them?

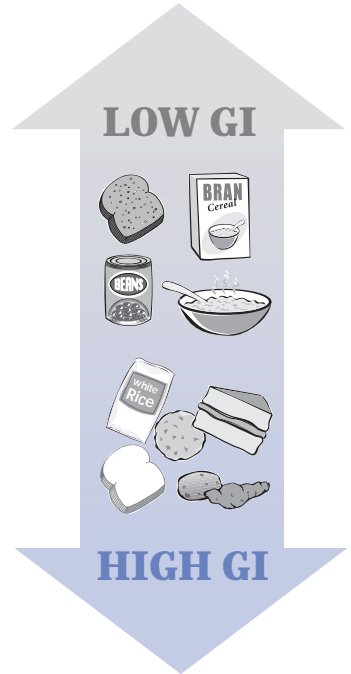
- Most low GI foods are high in fibre, vitamins and minerals and fit the healthy eating guidelines.
- The high fibre content of many of these foods makes them filling.

What's wrong with them?

- They can distract you from more important issues, e.g. reducing energy (kilojoule) intake.
- They unnecessarily restrict your food choice, e.g. discriminating against some vegetables and fruit.
- The GI value of a food changes when it is eaten as part of a meal.

What should you be aware of when following these diets?

- Use the GI as a general guide to improve the quality of your diet by including more wholegrains.
- Check the fat content as low GI foods are not always low in fat.
- The glycaemic load (GL) is a better measure as it takes account of the amount of carbohydrate present in a serving of the food.



What is the bottom line?

- It has not been proven that low GI diets have an advantage for weight loss.

**WHAT YOU DID AND DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT
TWO COMMON WEIGHT LOSS DIETS**

WEIGHT LOSS

Use a weight loss strategy that will work for you

Some people may find it easier to cut back on carbohydrate foods like potatoes, bread and cake; others may find it easier to cut back on high fat foods like chips, butter and mayonnaise. Whatever choice you do make the bottom line is to reduce your kilojoule intake.

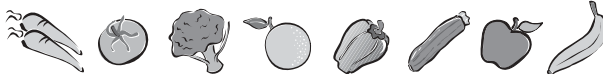
- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit.
- Choose mainly wholegrain foods rather than refined grain foods made from white flour.
- To be heart healthy choose vegetable oils and margarine rather than butter.

Weight loss tips:

- Eat breakfast, to kick-start your metabolism for the day.
- Don't skip meals
- Watch your portion size
- Keep a food diary for a week, to analyse your eating habits.
- Weigh yourself once a week at the same time, to monitor your weight.
- Be active for at least 30 minutes on most days (e.g. brisk walking), as exercise helps to burn body fat.

For further information see:

- [Healthy Weight for Adults](#)
- [Eating for Healthy Adult New Zealanders \(Ministry of Health pamphlets\)](#)



*Researched and developed for Auckland Regional Public Health Service by
Jasmine Walton (New Zealand registered dietitian)*