

GET WELL & Stay Well

A Publication of the UMMC Patient Resource Center Winter 2004

Welcome to *GET WELL & Stay Well*

I am excited to welcome you to the first edition of *GET WELL & Stay Well*, a newsletter dedicated to promoting health and wellness in patients, families, and the community. Each edition will focus on important articles relevant to the season and the community's hot health topics. For example, this month is National Nutrition Month, and we will compare how those low carb diets stack up, (without pancakes, of course!) This newsletter is produced by the University of Maryland Medical Center's (UMMC) new Patient Resource Center, opening March 3, 2004.

The Patient Resource Center provides a reading library, computer work areas, and a wide variety of programs to meet your learning needs. Patients and families are encouraged to use the space during their treatment at UMMC, and the community is invited to participate in programs as well. While the Patient Resource Center does not give specific medical advice, we will offer information to help you better understand your health and any health problems. The Patient Resource Center asks you to talk with a qualified healthcare provider for answers to your personal health questions.

Our vision is to help people—Get Well and Stay Well. Please look at our course schedule, read our informative articles, and learn how to better care for yourself and others. We hope that we will help you along your journey to health and wellness.

Stay Healthy,

Anne D. Williams, RN, MS, Editor

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Low Carb Diets: The Right Way to Go?

Ellen Loreck, MS, RD, Clinical Nutrition Manager



Are your jeans too tight after eating too many holiday cookies, taking seconds on savory stuffing, or drinking too many glasses of rich eggnog? Or, are you a lifetime member of the "Need to Lose Weight Club?" Either way, if you want to slim down, you likely will turn to a "diet book" for weight loss advice. That's when the confusion can set in. Which plan will you choose? Atkins, South Beach, Dr. Phil or the classic Weight Watchers? Which one will do the best job in helping you quickly and painlessly take off the pounds and inches?

The low carb craze has taken over our collective approach to dieting. We can now buy low carb everything: pasta, bread, cereal, peanut butter and even beer. But is low carb the best way to go? Or, is a traditional low-fat diet better? Unfortunately, the verdict is not in. Keep reading to learn about the science, or lack thereof, behind the low carb plans.

So, why all the hoopla around low carb? How do the low carb diets work?

Low carb diets are based on the following premise:

- Carbohydrates, particularly the "bad carbs" such as white potatoes, rice, pasta, and bread cause a quick rise in blood sugar.
 - High blood sugar levels → increased insulin levels
 - Increased insulin levels → weight gain because of increased hunger

LOW CARB TERMS:

Glycemic Index (GI): Ranks foods according to how fast their sugars are released into the bloodstream (High GI-70 or more; Low GI-55 or less)

Glycemic Load (GL): Accounts for both the GI and how much carbohydrate a food provides in a single serving

- Low carb diets promote foods with a low GI and a low GL

Note: Most fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains have a low GL (low teens). However, the GI and GL increase significantly once fruit is pulverized into juice, or when whole grains are refined. Whole foods are better! For example, All-Bran™ has a GL of 4 and Cornflakes has a GL of 21. For more specifics about GL, see the following Web site: www.health.harvard.edu/newsweek

By far, the two most popular low carb diet plans are Atkins and South Beach. How do these plans compare? Check out the chart on the back for the specifics.

continued on back

Low Carb Diets, continued from front

	ATKINS	SOUTH BEACH
PHASES	Induction (2 weeks): On-going Weight Loss (OWL) Pre-Maintenance Maintenance	Phase 1 (2 weeks) Phase 2 (during remainder of weight loss) Phase 3 (maintenance)
CARB ALLOWANCE (Minimum need: 100-150 grams/day)	Induction Not >20 grams/day (= 1 1/2 slices bread) OWL: up to 60 grams/day	Phase 1: Sample meal plan has close to 20 grams Phase 2: Sample meal plans have 65-90 grams
PROMOTES HIGH PROTEIN	Yes	No
FAT ALLOWED	Until recently, no limit on type or amount Now: No >20% of calories as saturated fat (NIH: <7% saturated fat)	Heart healthy fats (vegetable oils: canola olive, etc), fatty fish & nuts Heart healthy proteins
MOST NEGATIVE FEATURES	Not heart healthy (excess saturated fat & cholesterol) Potential for excessive red meat intake → Increased risk for colon cancer Potential for increased bone loss/or kidney damage (due to high protein); if followed long-term (>1 year)	Limits some healthy foods because of Glycemic Index (e.g. bananas, carrots) Does not account for Glycemic Load

**So, WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?
LOW CARB OR LOW FAT?**

- Last year, three research teams reported the results of their controlled studies comparing low carb to traditional low fat diets. The results show that over a six-month period, obese people lost more weight on a low carb plan. The reason for the extra weight loss is unclear.
- It's important to note, however, that we don't know the long-term health effects of low carb diets. As with many health interventions, more research is needed.

WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE?

- If you choose to follow a low carb diet plan, be sure to choose one that:
- Includes heart-healthy fats and protein foods.

- Does not severely limit carbohydrate, but includes low GI/GL carbs like beans, whole fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Overall, the South Beach plan passes the nutrition muster better than Atkins!
- Beware: low carb does not always equal low calorie or heart healthy. For example, the "Atkins-friendly" foods on the TGI Friday's® menu include a New York Strip with Bleu Cheese and Buffalo wings. Remember that a calorie is a calorie, is a calorie. You must eat less than your body's needs to lose weight. There is nothing magical about eating low carb.
- Include exercise in your weight loss plan. Exercise builds muscle mass, which helps your body burn calories more efficiently.
- **MOVE MORE and EAT LESS! Some advice never changes!**

March/Early April 2004 Program Schedule

March 3, 12 noon
Patient Resource Center's Grand Opening

March 4, 12-1 pm
**The Super, Duper, Magic Bullet, Best Ever Diet Plan!—
What Really Works?**
Christine Dobmeier, RD

**March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 2,
10:30 am-12:30 pm**
Stork's Nest – Prenatal Education

March 9, 16, 23, 30, April 6, 12-1 pm
Food Safety
UMCC Greenebaum Cancer Center Nutrition Staff

March 11, 12-1pm
What Do I Feed My Overweight Child?
Mindy Athas, RD, CDE

March 16, 5-6:30 pm
**Transplant Education Series—Support Group
Infections, Rejections, and Biopsies – Oh My!**
Drs. Cangro & Philosophe and Transplant Coordinator

March 17
Daffodil Day
Stop buy to purchase daffodils to support the American Cancer Society

March 22, 1-4pm
CPR for Friends and Family (\$25)

March 31, 1-2 pm
Peripheral Vascular Disease: Are You at Risk?
Dr. Vasana Cheanvechai
12-2 Free Blood Pressure Screening

Coming Soon!
Smoking Cessation, Jazzercise®

To register for classes (except the Stork's Nest), please contact the Patient Resource Center at 410-328-WELL (9355). For Stork's Nest, please call 410-328-2944. All sessions are free unless noted.