



FOOD MATTERS

Food Matters

with Consultant Nutritionist Sue Radd

Atkins diet

With more than half the population now battling the bulge, high-protein, low-carbohydrate weight-loss diets have surged in popularity. These diets seem to produce rapid results, but are they good for your overall health?

Research on the Atkins diet, the best known and most extreme of these diets, suggests weight loss by such means may be short-lived. Three recent studies show the Atkins diet may help you lose slightly more weight for periods of up to six months. But according to the longest study, there's no difference in the amount of weight loss after one year, compared with a conventional calorie-restricted low-fat, high-carb diet.

The bottom line: you can lose weight on any diet so long as you stick to it. But drop-out rates are high for both conventional and high-protein diets, so most people regain their lost weight within two years.

health risks

What can such diets do to your health?

Bones—high-animal protein intake promotes calcium loss from the body, increasing your risk of osteoporosis.

Heart—liberal use of saturated fats and cholesterol can raise your risk of heart disease.

Kidneys—high-protein diets speed up the decline in kidney function, if you have kidney problems.

Cancer risks—meat-rich diets that are low in vegetables and wholegrains raise the risk of bowel cancer.

lifestyle solution

Numerous health authorities have questioned the long-term safety of diets high in animal foods—and it seems they may not work any better.

A combination of regular physical activity and a calorie-restricted diet is required for permanent weight loss. This means making small, sustained changes to bad lifestyle habits. There is nothing magical about the ratio of protein relative to carbohydrates. Where diet is concerned at least, total calories still rule!

For a delicious recipe to help keep you trim and healthy, see page 41.