

Low carb diets help obesity, cancer and diabetes: Australia's sugar controversy

Step away from those treats: Find out why in the article.

Photo by Ethan Miller



July 26, 2014

Although health organizations and the USDA recommend following low-fat diets and avoiding red meat, several new studies have shown that high fat low carb diets and protein are better choices for weight loss and related conditions such as metabolic syndrome. Now a consortium of 26 physicians and nutrition researchers have created a detailed document showing why low carb diets are best for diabetes, reported UAB News on July 24.

"Diabetes is a disease of carbohydrate intolerance," said Barbara Gower, Ph.D., professor and vice chair for research in the UAB Department of Nutrition Sciences and one of the study authors. "Reducing carbohydrates is the obvious treatment."

Emphasizing the benefits of low carb diets for diabetes, Gower added, "The resistance of government and private health agencies is very hard to understand." She and the other authors emphasized that low-fat diets have failed to reverse the epidemic of obesity, heart disease and related conditions.

Their documentation features 12 points of evidence, all of which are supported by clinical studies. They range from highlighting the benefit to blood glucose levels to pointing out that restricting carbohydrates is the best way to reduce serum triglycerides and increase high-density lipoprotein.

"We've tried to present clearly the most obvious and least controversial arguments for going with carbohydrate restriction," said Richard David Feinman, Ph.D., professor of cell biology at SUNY Downstate Medical Center and lead author of the paper. He stressed the "positive approach" of the paper.

"The low-fat paradigm, which held things back, is virtually dead as a major biological idea. Diabetes is too serious a disease for us to try to save face by holding onto ideas that fail," added Feinman.

And for those who want to lose weight, several clinical studies also have pointed to low carb diets that emphasize protein and fats as the most effective approach. You don't need to eat animal protein to benefit. A new study shows that whey protein "increases calorie burn and fat utilization, helps the body maintain muscle, and triggers the brain to feel full," said Paul Arciero, a professor in the Health and Exercise Sciences department at Skidmore College, in a July 24 interview with Time magazine.

And don't dismiss dairy. Yogurt contains probiotics, shown to boost weight loss in a new study. "Yogurt, like other full-fat dairy, also has a fatty acid called conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) that studies show can improve fat burning," says nutritionist JJ Virgin.

Several other studies have proved protein power for weight loss. Researchers found that when dieters ate twice as much protein, they maintained their muscle mass while boosting their fat loss, reported News OK on July 24.

What constitutes a good source of protein? Check the nutrition label. The best sources of protein have 10 or more grams per serving, while "good" sources contain five to nine grams.

If you're still pondering protein, another new study indicates that it can help prevent colon cancer. Researchers found that replacing carbohydrates with protein and fat is an "easy intervention" for lowering your risk of colon cancer, reported Food Navigator on July 24.

The reason for this discovery resides in your gut. The University of Toronto researchers pinpointed gut bacteria linked to one of the most common forms of colon cancer. By following a low carb diet, you can reduce the incidence of that type of cancer by 75 percent.

"Our results suggest that a diet low in carbohydrates could benefit those with a genetic predisposition to colon cancer," said Alberto Martin, an associate professor in the Department of Immunology at the university.

"About 20 per cent of colon cancers thrive on mutations in genes involved in DNA mismatch repair. For this type of cancer, our study offers an explanation for the interplay among genetics, diet and intestinal microbiota," added Martin.

With all the evidence in favor of low-carb diets that boost protein and fats and restrict carbohydrates, it would seem obvious that consuming sugar is linked to obesity. But that's not the case for some researchers in Australia, who are attempting to prove that sugar plays no role in the country's obesity epidemic, reported ABC Net on July 24.

The controversy began when Professor Jennie Brand-Miller and a research colleague produced a controversial study declaring sugar "not guilty" against charges of causing weight gain. A nutritionist and diet author, Brand-Miller's paper entitled "The Australian Paradox" did, however, attract concern about the validity of the conclusions.

University of Sydney investigator Professor Robert Clark reviewed accusations that she had a conflict of interest and had tried to make sugar appear healthier. Although he dismissed six of the seven allegations, he made it clear that he felt her writing deserved the criticism it received from Rory Robertson, who flagged the paper for what appeared to be inaccurate data.

As a result, Clark ruled that a new "paper [be] prepared for publication in consultation with the faculty that specifically addresses and clarifies the key factual issues examined in this inquiry. This new paper should be written in a constructive manner that respects issues relating to data raised in the Australian Paradox paper by the complainant."

That complainant, former Reserve Bank of Australia economist Rory Robertson, began his battle two years ago. He was baffled about the paper's conclusion that although sugar was partly to blame for the obesity epidemics in the United States and United Kingdom, it was somehow innocent in Australia.

The combination of erroneous conclusions (for example, the authors made it appear that Australia consumers had reduced their soft drink consumption by mixing market share with per capita consumption) and blatant math errors riled Robertson. Although the new paper has yet to be produced, he has succeeded in drawing attention to the role that sugar plays in the global epidemic of obesity.

Also attracting attention for his battle against sugar is cardiologist Dr. Aseem Malhotra. For almost 40 years, diet experts and doctors have urged overweight people to stop eating saturated fat in order to reduce their risk of heart disease. But they're misleading consumers, according to Dr. Malhotra.

"Scientific evidence shows that this advice has, paradoxically, increased our cardiovascular risks. Furthermore, the government's obsession with levels of total cholesterol, which has led to the overmedication of millions of people with statins, has diverted our attention from the more egregious risk factor of atherogenic dyslipidaemia," he asserted.

Dr. Malhotra accuses the food industry of replacing saturated fat in products with sugar. The result: Products high in sugar labeled "low-fat" or "fat-free." However, he says that all that sugar actually contributes more to heart disease than fat.

And in the United States, producers of the film "Fed Up" are waging their own war. With experts such as Dr. Robert Lustig speaking out, the documentary hopes to make a dent in the diets of the nation.

<http://www.examiner.com/article/low-carb-diets-help-obesity-cancer-and-diabetes-australia-s-sugar-controversy>