

# Get the Facts - Carbs

**Myth:**

Carbs are bad.

**Fact:**

Okay this one really bugs me. With the fad diets exploding over the past few years, I have been **told** this statement more times than I would like to count. I think the biggest culprit of the perpetuation of this myth is the Paleo diet.

**Here is the logic behind the myth:**

I stopped eating carbohydrates from the Paleo and Atkins diet, therefore the carbs made me fat.

One main problem with this is that there are a lot of other factors contributing to the weight loss that has not been accounted for. With any of the low carb diets, people end up overall eating less. This may be due to the large carbohydrate prevalence in the American diet and/or the fact that people do not know what to eat that has low carbs so they just don't eat as much. Either way there are plenty of other reasons that may contribute to the weight loss.

Looking into further depth, kcal to kcal, 1 gram of carbohydrates have the exact same amount of energy as 1 gram of protein and actually fat has twice as much energy per gram. Structurally, carbohydrates are broken down for fuel more rapidly due to the lack of energy needed for conversion to a form able to partake in glycolysis or the citric acid cycle.

However, not all carbs are created equal. Some carbohydrates require more modification before they are able to be utilized. For example, 100 grams of sugar is readily absorbed by the gut and can be used immediately for energy and any left-over food products (extra carbs, fats, or proteins) will be converted to fat. On the other hand, a starchy or complex carbohydrate meal of 100 grams will take significantly longer to absorb therefore giving a steady stream of energy allowing for utilization of the appropriate amount of energy. Also, if the digestion of the starch is too slow, fats and glycogen may be mobilized for fuel during digestion which is the opposite of the former situation of fat storage.

To drive home the point that fat loss is driven by calories and not carbs is a story about a professor of nutrition science at Kansas State. In order to prove this point, Mark Haub consumed nothing but hostess treats, Doritos, and Oreos for 10 weeks. He kept under his normal daily calorie amount at 1800 kcals per day. In the 10 weeks, professor Haub lost 27 lbs, his LDL decreased by 20 percent, HDL increased by 20 percent and triglyceride levels decreased by 39 percent.

**Conclusion:**

Again relating back to the nutritional basis that calories are what govern weight loss, carbohydrates are not the enemy. In fact, carbs are necessary for proper repair of tissues whether it be from exercise, illness, or growth. A moderated and well balanced diet is the key rather than counting every gram of carbs, fats, and protein.

References: Alan Aragon Research Review "A Closer Look at the Claim 'A Carb is A Carb.'"

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