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Exercise and Low Carb Diet's Make Poor Partners

By Charles Remington

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Over the last twenty five years the most common question asked me by frustrated exercisers, has been what exercise routine will get me the body I desire? My answer is always the same. They need to start exercising better judgement and learn that exercise alone will not solve their body composition problem. I believe the number one reason for starting an exercise program is weight reduction, even before fitness and health concerns. Exercise by itself is a poor weight manager and it increases the need for better nutritional requirements. I believe I would receive very little disagreement that a combination of nutrition and exercise is the answer to improvement in weight loss (fat loss), fitness and health risk concerns. With obesity reaching epidemic rates and the drop out rate of most health clubs' remaining high this article intent is to lay the foundation why exercise and low carbohydrate diet's are poor partners.

Over the last three decades I have seen extreme changes in the macro nutrients (proteins, carbohydrates and fats) combinations in our quests for the ideal body. Everything from high carbohydrate, low fat, high protein, to the current low carbohydrate craze has bombarded us, though the failure rates in managing our weight continue to rise. The problem lies in our bodies ability to adapt to change, especially extreme change. If your goal is to lose fat you must provide your muscle enough quality fuel without being over fueled. This is especially true if your goal to lose fat includes exercise. The secret is not found in elimination of macro nutrients, but in management of them. Understanding how to fuel your muscles prior to exercise sessions and replacing fuel after workouts is critical or your body will break down muscle for fuel.

Understanding how our muscles use the calories we eat as fuel for muscle contraction is the first step in knowing what to do and not to do. A basic nutritional knowledge tells us that proteins repair and rebuild cells, carbohydrates energize cells and fats provide hormonal foundation for cells. When we lack balance in protein, carbohydrates and fats are bodies adjust and can use all three as a source of fuel for muscle contraction and cellular energy. Though energy is needed for all cellular function, the focus of this article is muscle contraction and body composition. All muscle contraction derives energy

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from adenosine triphosphate or ATP. The primary source of ATP comes from glucose, which is stored in the muscles and liver as glycogen (glucose and water). Muscle contraction during anaerobic activity (resistance training) can use glycogen directly to form ATP. The process is anaerobic glycolysis, meaning it can use the glucose as energy with very little oxygen (90% glucose, 5% oxygen and 5% fatty acid). Our muscles only store enough ATP for short periods of muscle contraction, when depleted leads to muscle failure. The rest period between weight training sets allows additional ATP to be produced. During early stages of aerobic exercise, ATP is again created primarily from glucose until the heart and lungs provide enough oxygen to the muscles to allow fatty acids to be used to create ATP. So there you have it during resistance training and the beginning stages aerobic training the primary source of fuel is glucose.

This supports my claim that low carb diets and exercise make poor partners. To uncover why, we need to quickly look at the concept behind low carb diets and how they work. Any diet that provides 100 grams or less of carbohydrate daily. This article classifies as low carb diet's. This will quickly deplete

the glycogen stores in the muscle and liver. This by itself is testimony that our muscle's primary source of fuel is glucose. Fatty acids stored in the adipose tissue (fat cells) are now released into the blood and processed by the liver and some are turned into glucose (gluconeogenesis) and some remain fatty acids and both provide ATP for muscle contraction. One of the by products of this process is ketone bodies which can provide energy to brain and nervous system. The problem gluconeogenesis (non glucose turned into glucose) provides fuel to the muscle less efficiently than glycogenesis (glucose). The end result is increased muscle fatigue, decreased muscle power, which leads to poor athletic performance.

A recent study performed at the University of Connecticut showed that exercisers who switched from a balanced diet (proteins, carbohydrates and fats) to a low carb diet experience the following drop's in athletic performance. There was a 7 – 9 percent drop in muscle power and 6 percent drop in VO2 max of cardiovascular performance. Another factor to consider is the recuperation of muscle between workouts is decreased on low carb diets. So why would someone go on a low carb diet, especially when exercising? Because the initial weight loss that comes from the glycogen depletion is believed to be fat loss. We have become so focused on weight loss, that any weight loss is seen as good. As identified earlier in this article glycogen is a mixture of glucose and water and the majority are stored where? You guessed it, the muscle. A large percentage of the initial weight loss is coming from muscle loss. I don't think any exerciser's desire is to have smaller muscles as a result of their exercising. The goal of exercise should be to improve body composition, the percentage or ratio of muscle to body fat. This can only be accomplished by losing fat without the loss of muscle tissue. Maintaining muscle mass is vital to sustainable weight control. The following steps will protect your muscles as your losing fat, while reaching your ideal weight and ideal body composition.

FAT LOSS COACH Keys to losing FAT without losing MUSCLE

1. Cycle fat burning days with recovery days.

The secret to losing fat without losing muscle starts with not being too aggressive or extreme with your reduction of carbohydrates. You need carbohydrate management, not carbohydrate elimination. Over

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the last 12 years, with more than 10,000 clients I've found by reducing carbohydrates by 20% of daily needs and within 48 hours replenishing the glycogen in the muscle by eating 100% of daily carbohydrate requirements, allows for fat loss, without muscle loss. In essence you have two fat burning days, then a recovery day. By doing this you'll have the best of both worlds. You will experience fat loss that averages between 1–2 pounds weekly, while muscles are being well fed. You never drastically deplete the glycogen stores in the muscle so athletic performance is not affected like on a low carb diet.

2. Exercise on days where you are receiving more carbohydrates.

Exercising on days where muscle are getting more carbohydrates for fuel and taking days off from exercise when you are being aggressive about fat loss. One of the most difficult thoughts for exercisers to accept is that most of the results from exercise come when we are not exercising. They come after we exercise and in direct response to how the muscles receive nutrition after exercise.

3. Exercise 1.5 – 2 hours after eating when blood sugar levels and insulin levels are slowly declining.

As insulin levels increase in response to a rise in blood sugar after a meal, the cells are in an anabolic state (receiving nutrients). Insulin is the hormone that feeds are cells. As blood sugar levels drop,

insulin levels drop and the pancreas produces the hormone glucagon and nutrients stored in the fat cells are released to the blood and used for energy. The management of this blood sugar rise and drop is important. If blood sugar levels go to high insulin feeds the muscle cells and deposits excess into fat cells. If insulin levels go too low, the muscle cells are being under fed. A slow rise in blood sugar provides good nutrition to the muscles and a slow drop allows glucagon to take from the fat cells. Timing your exercise to this blood sugar decline allows the muscles to receive from the fat cells more effectively. It is important to never exercise without having at least one meal left in your day so that muscles can recuperate from exercise.

Final Thoughts

Long term success managing weight starts with the right approach. If you are overweight, the real problem is that you have too much body fat for how much muscle you possess. A body composition solution is needed, not just a weight loss diet. Your goal should be to lose fat without losing muscle or sacrificing your health in the process. To maintain your results your eating habits must develop life long character. Low carbohydrate diets provide initial weight loss, but at the high cost of losing muscle and reducing metabolism. They are inadequate sources of fuel to support exercise activity, which is vital in maintaining good health. The risks to your health long term makes low carbohydrate diet's poor solutions for life long weight management.

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Low Carb Recipes Actually Taste Great!

By Mike Yeager

Many people are beginning diets that encourage low carb recipes these days. But, what are low carb recipes? What things can and cannot be made into a low carb recipe? Following your diets strict guidelines is important, but using the Internet as a tool will help you. For instance, you may do a search for quick recipes and come up with many low carb options. There are many different diets to choose from that have low carb rules. But, many recipes may also be able to be changed into low carb by making simple changes. Meat recipes are probably the most obvious choice including chicken as it is such a healthy option in most cases. But, what about other choices? Cookie recipes may be the most difficult to find, but choices for sweets will be found. What about a special occasion? Yes, you can easily find easy gourmet recipes as well. Make in advance crockpot recipes? Yes, those too will be found with a little devoted looking.

The best option in finding these hard to find recipes would be to look on your low carb diet's website. You can also do a search for the exact thing or just a category using the Internet. Whatever means you choose, you will find many options to low carb recipes out there. Low carb recipes need to be healthy as well as follow the guidelines specified in your diet's plan. So, it is safe to say, that you will need to research what items you may and may not eat when following these diets by looking through the materials you have purchased or visiting the websites sponsored by those diets. Questions to ask and get answered include knowing the difference between good carbs and bad carbs. Dietitians recommend eating complex carbs because these are full of fiber, phytochemicals, vitamins, and minerals. Other carbs are ones, usually the ones to avoid are simple carbs which contain lots of sugar! There are more things to ask about your diet as well such as the different phases or just how to live a low carb life.

Once you know the information you need to choose which low carb recipes you are allowed or those that you are restricted from, changing your favorite recipes into low carb gets easier. Chicken and other meat recipes will be the easiest to switch maybe with very little effort. In certain diets, you are allowed to eat more vegetables, but are restricted on which ones. So instead of having a baked potato with your dinner, you have a baked sweet potato instead. The sweet potato has less of the "bad carbs" than the regular potato. Maybe instead of fries at your favorite restaurant, you get a salad. When it comes to making things at home, you need recipes that contain good carbs in the correct amounts for your diet.

A crock pot meal may contain a meat choice and fresh veggies, but leave out the potatoes or noodles. There are many choices you will need to make when looking for low carb recipes, but overall, it will be easy to find ones that will fit your taste buds. The most important things to understand are the rules of your low carb diet or lifestyle. Knowing which carbs you can and cannot eat, is the entire battle!

Mike Yeager

Publisher

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