

## Chapter 4: The Low Carb Progression

There are probably as many ways to begin a low carb lifestyle as there are people. Some people make an immediate and complete change. They go to their cupboards and refrigerators and pitch everything that is not “keto friendly”. Perhaps a light goes off in their heads and they see the wisdom of the lifestyle. Or, perhaps they are beset by a number of serious medical problems and realize that drastic change needs to be made to save life or limb. Others are more reluctant. They prefer to tiptoe into the lifestyle, like a timid swimmer trying to get into a cold swimming pool, a bit at a time. So, to help those who wish to introduce the low carb lifestyle by incremental steps, I suggest trying to implement one or more of the following suggestions.

Choose your own speed. Select one or two of the suggestions you are comfortable with and think he will be able to realistically achieve. Live with the changes for a while. Once you are used to ‘the temperature’, to use the timid swimmer analogy, you can choose to implement one or more other, perhaps more difficult suggestions.

When I tell patients the kinds of things they need to cut out of their diet, I often hear the complaint “Oh Doc, you’re taking away all the good stuff”. My response is generally “you’re looking at it all wrong”. How can these things be good if they’re causing you to put on weight and are bad for health? How can they be good if you’re having to take three medications for your diabetes, two more for your blood pressure and one for your cholesterol? I then explain that we need to start thinking like a healthy person.

If the patient is a nonsmoker, I often use the following example: If I went to your house and put an unopened pack of cigarettes on your kitchen counter, how long could I expect them to stay

there untouched? I usually get a response something like “forever”. Then I respond “exactly!” That’s because you’re thinking like a nonsmoker. We need to be able to walk by a plate of chocolate chip cookies and have the same reaction that a pack of cigarettes would to a nonsmoker. We need to be able to say to ourselves something like “Those things are nasty. They’re unhealthy. Those things will kill me.”

So, without further ado let’s consider one or more of the following suggestions to decrease carbohydrates from your diet:

1. **Stop drinking calories.** This may be one of the easier ways to decrease carbs. Granted it can be difficult to do for some. Some people never imagined having to give up their sweet tea or their favorite soft drink. But it is likely the reason they’re in their current predicament. Many individuals will begin to lose a significant amount of weight just by switching from sugary sodas to drinks that have no calories such as water or sparkling water, unsweet coffee or tea. Half-and-half for heavy whipping cream are fine for hot coffee or tea. Lemon may be used for cold iced tea. Many individuals don’t realize just how many calories such sugary drinks have. Other sources that may cause problems are fruit juices, fruit smoothies, specialty coffee drinks and energy drinks. From a nutritional standpoint, the simple truth is that adults don’t need to drink any calories.
2. **Stop eating sugar.** Cutting out candy, pastries, ice cream and most other desserts can be a problem for many. These are predominantly carbohydrates that are as bad as sugary soft drinks.
3. **Eliminate diet soda and artificial sweeteners.** Artificial sweeteners, although they do not contain calories, can contribute to higher insulin levels. And, since insulin is the hormone

we want to keep to a minimum, we need to eliminate as many artificial sweeteners as we can. The best artificial sweeteners are xylitol and Stevia. They should be used sparingly. Perhaps, in a special recipe rather than a drink consumed at every meal.

4. **Processed flour.** Processed, enriched flour is commonplace these days. It is found in breads, pastries, cakes, pies, crackers, and cereals to name a few. For many, this product is found in every meal and snack that they eat. They may have cereal, pancakes or waffles for breakfast. Crackers for a midmorning snack. At lunchtime they may have a sandwich, a wrap or a burrito of one kind or another. 4 their mid afternoon snack, they might have a cookie. With dinner they have garlic bread, yeast rolls or pita bread. And then for dessert, they may have a slice of cake, a slice of pie or cookies.
5. **Pasta.** Okay, this is processed flour too. But many people don't think of it as such. Included in this suggestion are noodles. Many people don't consider it bread-like but it is. It too will break down into sugar. Instead of pasta, consider substituting a shredded vegetable like zucchini or spaghetti squash in your pasta dish.
6. **Starchy vegetables.** The starchy vegetables are primarily those vegetables that grow below the ground. It includes potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, rutabaga, beets, radishes, etc.
7. **Fruit.** Fruits are nature-s candy. They contains sugar! Although we typically think of fruit as being healthy, to an individual who is overweight or battling diabetes, it is part of the problem. The only approved fruit on a very low carb diet are the berries: Strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and raspberries. These are used sparingly and not eaten by the pint. Some berries in whole milk plain yogurt make for a nice breakfast parfait.

8. **Eliminating most if not all grains.** This is probably the most difficult one of all. Grains, even if whole grains are used, are digested into carbohydrates. This includes oats found in such things as oatmeal, granola bars and breakfast cereals. It includes corn as found in corn on the cob, cornbread, grits, corn flakes, tortilla chips and corn chips. It includes wheat found in breads of all kinds, pastas and the processed foods mentioned above. And, it includes rice which is included on the plates at our favorite Chinese or Mexican restaurants. Other grains include quinoa and buckwheat. For those who enjoy baking, coconut flour and almond flour are healthy alternatives. There are an unlimited number of recipes available that use these low carb flours.
9. **Unhealthy fats and oils.** Unhealthy fats and oils should likewise be eliminated. They are manufactured through elaborate process that is unnatural. They are made “under pressure, and deodorized. They cause metabolic damage by creating an unhealthy ratio of Omega 6 fatty acids to Omega 3 fatty acids. A healthy ratio of Omega 6 to omega-3 is on the order of 3 to 1 or 2 to 1. These processed oils have ratios of 20 to 1. It is thought that they are not good antioxidants. Many problems are linked with these unfavorable ratios. Instead, oils should be cold pressed oils such as olive oil, avocado oil or coconut oil. Butter and ghee can be used for cooking and adding flavor to food as well.

#### Chapter Summary

- Not everybody is comfortable plunging into the low carb lifestyle. The best low carb diet, is one that you can adhere to.

- Some people do better by introducing small changes and getting used to them before introducing other changes.
- Incremental changes that can be implemented include:
  - Eliminating any drink that has calories
  - Eliminating diet drinks, eliminating sweets
  - Eliminating diet sodas and artificial sweeteners
  - Eliminating processed flour
  - Eliminating pasta
  - Eliminating starchy vegetables
  - Eliminating fruit
  - Introducing healthy fats and oils into salad dressings and cooking.
  - Eliminating all grains such as oats, corn, wheat, rice and others.