

SUMMERLIN

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WEEKLY

HEALTH & FITNESS

Ask Dan Eiden

By Dan Eiden - Personal Trainer
and Summerlin Weekly Columnist

Question: What is the deal with the Atkins diet? To me it seems people just gain all the weight back when they reintroduce carbs to their diet, and is all that fat really healthy for you?

Answer: The Atkins diet, for those not familiar with it, is a diet that either eliminates or severely reduces carbohydrate intake to get the body into a state called Ketosis. Ketosis is a state in which the body goes into when there is not enough carbohydrates to use for fuel. In the absence of carbohydrates the body burns Ketones (fragmented fatty acids) for fuel. Ketones yield about 7 calories a gram as compared to regular fatty acids which have 9. This results in a much quicker fat loss compared to a regular diet consisting of carbohydrates, but there are several problems with the Atkins diet. One, is the body seems to adapt very quickly to this type of diet and the fat loss comes to a stand still. Two, ketosis is a catabolic state (break down of tissue, i.e. muscle) in which one may lose a lot of body fat but also a lot of muscle due to the catabolic nature of ketosis and the hormone glucagons that is secreted during ketosis. Three, in answer to your other question about the high amount of fat in the diet, I don't like the reliance on high amounts of saturated fats and more importantly processed fats (trans-fatty acids) that the diet calls for. Long term this could cause serious health problems. Four, the diet gives one a false sense of fat loss due to the large amounts of water lost from the absence of carbohydrates. It is not uncommon for someone to lose up to 10 to 15 pounds in the first few weeks of the Atkins diet due to mainly a loss of water and some fat, but not nearly

as much fat loss as one thinks. The weight loss in the beginning is predominately water. Once one resumes eating carbohydrates again the weight comes back almost immediately. This causes someone to think they gained fat back when in reality it is just water weight, but this can psychologically mess with a dieters head and cause them to either binge out or quit the diet and resume their regular bad eating habits.

The best answer to proper nutrition for fat loss involves a proper balance of all-natural foods spaced out into smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day. The proper types of foods involve good sources of protein, low-glycemic carbohydrates, and healthy unsaturated fats and essential fats. In a nutshell it is just eating the right foods, at the right times and in the right amounts (portions). This will produce much better and healthier results and good long term eating habits that one can follow for the rest of their life.

Question: Is walking at a consistent pace for a long distance more beneficial than sprinting for a short distance?

Answer: This is a question I get very often from people because there is a lot of misinformation in the fitness field. There are several reasons why high intensity/short duration cardiovascular exercise is superior to low intensity/long duration. High intensity/short duration cardiovascular exercise, such as sprinting interspersed with periods of rest then sprint repeated several times i.e interval training, is far better for fat-burning and for improving cardiovascular fitness (VO2 max). The reason people believe low intensity/long duration cardiovascular exercise is better for fat-burning is because a greater percentage of fat is burned at a lower intensity compared to a higher intensity and because more total calories are usually burned at low intensity/long duration

cardiovascular exercise than high intensity/short duration cardiovascular exercise. People who go by this notion are missing the whole point though. The percentage of fat burned for fuel (energy) is not nearly as significant as the amount of fat burned for energy. A lower intensity cardiovascular workout may burn a greater percentage of fat but the total amount of fat burned with a high intensity workout is much greater. Also, the amount of total calories burned during exercise is very small and insignificant compared to the fat-burning zone a high intensity/short duration cardiovascular workout will put you in for hours and hours after exercise. Cardiovascular exercise as well as weight-training can stimulate your body metabolically and hormonally in a positive way. Exercise can elevate your metabolic rate for hours and hours after exercise and can stimulate the release of significant amounts of growth hormone (a very potent fat burning and muscle building hormone) for hours and hours after exercise. It appears that they both rise directly with the intensity of exercise not the duration (greater intensity = greater elevation of metabolic rate and larger release of growth hormone). As you can see intensity is the key component not the duration. This being said I advise one to slowly and gradually increase the intensity of their cardiovascular exercise routine and not just jump into very high intensity cardiovascular exercise such as sprinting.

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