

Healthy Weight Loss and Carbs, Proteins and Fats

Food can be broken down into three types of what we term macronutrients – this includes carbohydrates, proteins and fats. We hear about these all the time and it can be overwhelming for us to absorb all the differing opinions and information about them. For example, which of these are considered “good” or “bad”, how much of each we are supposed to consume and what are the ideal ratios.

First of all, it is important to distinguish fad dieting from developing good, healthy long-term eating habits. Sure, fad diets may help you lose weight in the short-term, but this single-minded focus neglects to address disease prevention, proper body metabolism and overall wellness. Try not to get caught up in overly broad ideas like “cutting out fats”, “low-carb foods” or “high-protein diets” because following these recommendations can lead to health problems. The idea is for you to focus on the **quality and variety of foods** that you consume.

With carbohydrates, don’t buy into the idea of only eating low-carb foods. Your body needs carbohydrates to properly function, and depriving it of carbs can alter your body’s metabolism and lead to long-term weight difficulties. Do eat carbs, but emphasize eating complex carbs, which can be found in whole grains, vegetables, fresh fruit, lentils, beans, nuts and seeds – in addition, these foods also contain fibre which is essential for proper functioning of your digestive tract. Simple or refined carbs are the types you should avoid, which are found in refined foods containing sugar, white flours and processed ingredients.

Protein should not be consumed in overly high quantities. In general, we North Americans already do consume large quantities of protein. Excess protein can stress the kidneys and prevent the proper function of energy production pathways in the body. As well, for non-vegetarians, protein from animal sources should be consumed in moderation. Animal proteins do contain saturated fats and also worsen inflammation. Meat products can also contain antibiotic and hormone residues, so organic meat should be used. Protein can be found in soy products, beans, seeds, nuts, whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Quinoa, a whole grain, and tofu are ample protein sources for vegetarians, although simply eating a mixed vegetable diet will supply sufficient protein for most people.

Fats are not all bad. Fats are absolutely essential for our bodies to function and exist. You may have heard of a key type of essential fat called, “omega 3 fats”. This can be found in high quantities in nuts and seeds (almonds, walnuts, flax, hemp, pumpkin, sunflower), canola, soy and cold-water fish. These omega oils protect against heart disease, cancer, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, arthritis, brain function, and inflammation. Yes, these are fats, but they are beneficial to your health! The fats you want to stay away from are saturated and trans-fats (in hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils).

Be sure to enjoy eating healthy. There are always options to satisfy your own unique tastes. Your tastes will also change as your health and weight improve. Try not to be hard-set on rigid guidelines, rather eat things in moderation and balance and with lots of variety.

The key is to select good quality foods that you enjoy eating and that make you feel good!