



Low fat or low carb? Choose what works

I'm at high risk for developing Type 2 diabetes. I've started paying more attention to what I eat and have lost a few pounds, but should I also avoid high-carb foods?

For people with Type 2 diabetes, two key goals should be to maintain a healthy weight and keep blood sugars under control. Given the latter, it may seem like a good idea to keep carbohydrate-based foods to a minimum. After all, carbohydrates are sugars, so restricting them might seem obvious when people with diabetes -- or at risk for developing it -- are trying to lose weight.

But a recent study indicates that there's no "one size fits all" diet even for people with Type 2 diabetes. The year-long University of Cincinnati study, published in the February 2009 issue of *Diabetes Care*, examined 124 overweight or obese people with Type 2 diabetes and how they fared on either a diet high in monounsaturated fatty acids (a "Mediterranean" style diet) or one higher in carbohydrates and lower in fats. The idea was to examine the long-term health effects of following a Mediterranean-style diet.

For both groups, researchers personalized the participants' meal plans to be sure they provided 200 to 300 calories less than what the individuals needed to maintain their weight. That is, the focus of both diets was weight loss, with researchers comparing health

effects of higher monounsaturated fats versus higher carbs. The results? At the end of the year, 23 percent (29) of the participants had dropped out, mainly due to relocation or hectic schedules that didn't allow for attending sessions with a dietitian. For those participants who remained in the study, diet records revealed that they stuck with their dietary plans for the year-long intervention, including adding more whole grains, fruits and vegetables to their diets. Participants in both groups had similar improvements in weight, body fat, blood sugar control, HDL ("good" cholesterol) levels, and blood pressure.

The researchers concluded that people with Type 2 diabetes can choose from a variety of diets, including a Mediterranean style diet or one that is higher in carbs. The important thing is to find a meal plan that fits with their lifestyle, is satisfying and is something they can stick with. The idea should be to eat a balanced, healthful diet that restricts calories enough to result in weight loss. For people who are overweight or obese, even a modest weight loss leads to health benefits.

For more information about diabetes, including information about the latest research and recommendations, see the Web site of the American Diabetes Association, <http://www.diabetes.org>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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Editor:

Your readers in central Ohio may be interested in attending "Cooking for a Healthy Lifestyle with the Diabetic Chef," Monday, March 30, at 6:30 p.m. See details at <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~news/story.php?id=5015>

This column was reviewed by Martha Belury, professor of human nutrition in the College of Education and Human Ecology and researcher with the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center.

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