



The Atkins Diet

Atkins' this, Atkins' that!! The diet of choice by the so called "Celebrity population", but yet Catherine Zeta Jones recently stated that she is not nor never was a follower of Atkins'. Many a Celeb has been put on the "weight loss pedestal" courtesy of the fad diet and there's been so much media coverage about it that it's getting sometimes confusing about the pro's and cons.

Wonder cure's, diets and secrets of youthful good looks have been around since Cleopatra credited bathing in asses milk as the secret to beauty. There Atkins' is in a long line of "wonders", (yet it must be said very profitable for the Atkins' Foundation), diets to have hit the market in the last 50 years. As we are reminded by the Irish Nutritional and Dietetic Institute, that in the 1950's, smoking was once promoted as a lifestyle and weight controlling option, especially to women and now look at the result of that. Guiding through the Atkins' lifestyle, the INDI (Irish Nutritional and Dietetic Institute), is made up of over 400 professional, qualified dietitians and scientists, and took us through the looking glass at the Diet.

How it works: Atkins diet works leaving out a main food group called carbohydrates which are found in bread, potatoes, pasta, fruit, vegetables, rice, beers, wine. etc. Carbohydrates are the body's first choice of energy and when we omit this group of foods the body starts to breakdown its own body fat to survive. When fat is being broken down it produces toxins called ketones which should not normally be present in our bodies. Ketones are responsible for the bad smell from people's breath on the Atkins diet and are toxic to our body Ketones may also put an extra strain on our kidneys which are responsible for getting rid of them. Foods like bread, rice, pasta etc supply our bodies with many essential nutrients like fibre, as well as many vitamins for example A, C and E. Therefore many people experience severe constipation on the Atkins Diet. In the short term this does not pose any serious health issues but prolonged constipation may be associated with certain forms of bowel cancer. Vitamins A, C, and E are now referred to as the ACE vitamins as well as being essential for healthy skin, hair etc foods supplying these to us contain a huge amount of protective factors against heart disease, and cancers

More than just a weight issue – there's the whole body to consider.

According to Margot Brennan of the INDI "loosing weight successfully and keeping it off is best achieved when overall lifestyle changes are made. This involves changing our diet and introducing exercise on a regular basis. The Atkins Diet does not include exercise as part of its programme nor are you tackling the bad eating habits that caused you to gain weight in the first place." Adding to this is the fact that all medical bodies and preventative medicine campaigns and government health agencies promote exercise as one of the key message in health promotion.

The Credibility & Reputation of the Diet Ask your self a simple question; would you drive a car that wasn't roadworthy? Now, let's look at what we know so far about Atkins. We currently have no evidence to suggest that people that loose weight on the Atkins diet kept it off when they returned to normal eating. The Atkins Diet is in fact a 4 stage approach during which carbohydrates are slowly re- introduced however most people never get to this point and abandon the diet once they loose weight, probably to return to their bad eating habits, regain the weight and start another diet



next time. With all quick fix or fad dieting it has been shown that “Yo-Yo” dieting actually makes you fatter in long term.

So what are the alternatives? To lose weight successfully try the following

- Consult your GP; they have all the medical information to help.
- Keep a food diary for a week. Write down all you eat and drink for a week. BE honest!! This will help you to see where your down falls are.
- Cut out the obvious high calorie foods like sweets, crisps, biscuits, chips and reduce your alcohol intake
- Don't skip meals as this leads to increased hunger causing you to binge
- Start to exercise. Ideally 3 twenty-minute walks a week are a great start.

If anyone needs further help or information, log on to www.indi.ie or to see a dietitian call 01/2804839

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