

News Of Nutrition

What's Missing From Your Low-Carb Lifestyle?

(NAPSA)—Although a popular way to lose weight, low-carb diets may restrict the intake of vital nutrients found in carbohydrate-rich foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grains. While nutrients important to a healthy lifestyle, such as dietary fiber, vitamins, and calcium, may be in short supply in high-protein/low-carb diets, there are ways for dieters to incorporate them without adding carbs.

“Chronic nutritional deficiencies can make low-carb dieters feel tired and irritable in the short-term,” says Dr. Pamela Peeke, M.D., M.P.H., a nationally recognized nutrition expert and author of “Fight Fat After Forty.” “Over time, this can lead to more serious side effects and consequences, so it’s important for low-carb dieters to find ways to get the nutrients they need.”

A diet low in fiber can lead to irregularity, a common side effect of low-carb diets. Significant changes in bowel habits may eventually lead to serious digestive tract problems including chronic constipation, diverticular disease and hemorrhoids.

While the American Dietetic Association recommends a daily intake of 20 to 35 grams of fiber, most low-carb dieters fall short, says Peeke.

“Low-carb diets often limit daily fiber intake to the single digits,” she explains. “For those who do not get enough, incorporating a low-carb bulk-fiber product is an effective way to increase fiber consumption.”



There are supplements available that can help people following a low-carb diet get the nutrients and fiber they need.

Citrucel® caplets contain zero carbohydrates per dose and help dieters stay regular without gas or bloating. Their main ingredient, methylcellulose, is a soluble fiber that doesn’t ferment in the digestive tract like other common bulk fiber sources.

Calcium is another nutrient often missing from low-carb diets, due to the restricted intake of high-carbohydrate dairy products like milk and yogurt. While some low-carb vegetables like broccoli contain calcium, a dieter would have to consume 17 cups of it, at a cost of 190 grams of carbohydrates and 935 calories, to reach the daily calcium requirement.

“On average, more than 75 percent of adult Americans do not get enough calcium, and I suspect that average is higher among low-carb dieters,” Peeke says. “To help protect the body’s calcium supply that is so vital to

maintaining strong bones and supporting the function of the heart, muscles and nerves, those on low-carb eating plans may want to incorporate a calcium supplement into their daily diets.”

Calcium supplements, such as Os-Cal® or TUMS®, which contain no or very small amounts of carbohydrates, can help people achieve recommended amounts of calcium quickly, conveniently and inexpensively. For most supplements, it takes just one or two tablets with both breakfast and dinner to meet the recommended amount of calcium.

Diets that limit fruits, vegetables and whole grains may also be deficient in certain vitamins, such as folic acid and vitamin C, that the body needs to function. “Low-carb dieters should consider taking a multivitamin to ensure they get what their foods are missing,” says Peeke. “And women should make sure their multivitamins contain the recommended amount of folic acid, a B vitamin that is essential for cell growth and reproduction.”

Folic acid, explained Peeke, is found in dark leafy green vegetables and fruits, and many fortified cereals, which are often restricted on low-carb eating plans.

“It is possible to lose weight and maintain a healthy lifestyle when following a low-carb diet, but dieters should work with their health care professionals to ensure they are supplying their bodies with enough of the nutrients they need,” says Peeke.