

Manic Aspects of the "Low-Carb" Craze - Part 1 of 4

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☀ **Mania Defined**

mān'ia n. excessive enthusiasm (*for* thing, *for* doing); eager pursuit or admiration

☀ **Low-Carb Diet Defined**

Low-carbohydrate diets designed for weight reduction require the elimination from the diet of all calorie-bearing carbohydrate save for 50 to 100g per day. Put into perspective:*

Serving of Food	Net Carb** (g)
White Bread – slice	14
100% WW Bread – slice	11
60% WW Bread – slice	12
Apple – medium	17
Banana – 22 cm long	25
Baked potato – 12 cm long	47
Boiled potato – 7 cm long	26

*Nutrient Value of Some Common Foods. Health Canada. 1998

** Carbohydrate less dietary fibre

A low-carb diet requires, as do all therapeutic diets, a great amount of determination and discipline. For example, one baked potato approximates the 50g per day allotment; add two slices of whole-wheat bread and a banana, and the upper allowance of 100g is reached. There is no provision for that fresh-picked apple. If consumed, the diet will not result in reduction of body fat and the intended weight loss.

☀ **Reconciling Media Reports**

Various market research results report that as much as 20% of the American population is on a low-carb diet, as are an undetermined number of Canadians. Given the restrictive requirements of a true weight-reduction, fat-burning, low-carb diet, it is highly unlikely that 20% of the American population

is sufficiently disciplined to follow the regime. It is inconceivable that they themselves, their friends and family members tolerate the negative side effects of the diet – reference being especially made to the bad breath associated with ketosis, a physiological condition which can easily arise from low-carb intake. Unless, of course, this truly is a mania we are witnessing.

☀ **Digging into the Details**

It appears that the meaning of a genuine low-carb, weight reduction diet is misunderstood by several stakeholders, particularly market researchers, survey participants, the media, food manufacturers and the public. Yet to be clarified is: how a researcher defined 'low carb' – both food and diet – at the outset of a market survey; in what manner participants themselves identify and classify sources of carbohydrate; if this interpretation is consistent with the definition (if there is one) in use by the researcher; and the amount of carbohydrate participants consume on a daily basis. Without this clarification, survey results cannot be relied upon to reflect consumer attitudes, purchase behaviour and product usage.

☀ **The Bigger Question**

.... yet to asked, heard and addressed is "What is the underlying and desperate need (read: mania) that motivates legions of vulnerable people to defy, attempt to defy or hope to defy, the way human beings have eaten since the dawn of civilization?" **FF**

☀ **Some web-sites**

www.google.ca (Enter low-carb)

<http://www.consumer.gov/weightloss/>

(Partnership for Healthy Weight Management)

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