Low-Carb, High-Meat Diets Are Heavy on the Health Risks

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A low-carbohydrate diet of mostly meat sources for fat and proteins may pump up your risk of death, according to a study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* and reported by HealthDay News.

Researchers found that people on low-carb veggie-based diets showed lower death rates from cancer, cardiovascular disease and other mortality causes overall when compared with people on low-carb meat-heavy regimens such as the Atkins diet.

For the study, researchers analyzed data from two studies: one followed more than 85,000 women from 1980 to 2006; the other followed 44,500 men from 1986 to 2006. Researchers compared a low-carb, plant-sourced diet and a low-carb, meat-based diet among the two groups.

Study participants on the animal-based diet showed a 14 percent increased risk of dying from heart disease, a 28 percent increased risk of dying from cancer and a 23 percent higher risk of death overall.

Conversely, participants who got their proteins and fat from vegetables and plants had a 23 percent lower risk of dying from heart disease and a 20 percent lower death rate overall.

“We looked at these two versions of low-carb diets and found that the impact of the two are drastically different,” said Frank B. Hu, MD, PhD, a nutritionist at the Harvard School of Public Health and the lead study author. “Those who follow the animal-based, low-carb diet have an increased risk of total mortality and cancer mortality in particular.”

But Atkins Nutritionals Inc. statement countered that the low-carb diet referenced in the study did not represent the Atkins eating regimen. In addition, an accompanying editorial said the study may not have taken into account variables such as smoking and education levels.

Still, researchers unrelated to the study pointed out that what’s most important is food portions and eating a balanced diet. For healthy plant-based sources of fats, Hu recommends vegetable oils, nuts and peanut butter. For proteins, he recommends legumes, nuts and whole grains.

Did you know plant-based diets could also lower your risk for diabetes? Click here to learn how.

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