

Intermittent, low-carbohydrate diets more successful than standard dieting

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An intermittent, low-carbohydrate diet was superior to a standard, daily calorie-restricted diet for reducing weight and lowering blood levels of insulin, a cancer-promoting hormone, according to recent findings.

Researchers at Genesis Prevention Center at University Hospital in South Manchester, England, found that restricting carbohydrates two days per week may be a better dietary approach than a standard, daily calorie-restricted diet for preventing breast cancer and other diseases, but they said further study is needed.

"Weight loss and reduced [insulin levels](#) are required for breast cancer prevention, but [these levels] are difficult to achieve and maintain with conventional dietary approaches," said Michelle Harvie, Ph.D., SRD, a research dietician at the Genesis Prevention Center, who presented the findings at the 2011 CTRC-AACR San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium, held Dec. 6-10, 2011.

Harvie and her colleagues compared three diets during four months for effects on weight loss and blood markers of [breast cancer risk](#) among 115 women with a family history of breast cancer. They randomly assigned patients to one of the following diets: a calorie-restricted, low-carbohydrate diet for two days per week; an "ad lib" low-carbohydrate diet in which patients were permitted to eat unlimited protein and healthy fats, such as lean meats, olives and nuts, also for two days per week; and a standard, calorie-restricted daily [Mediterranean diet](#) for seven days per week.

Data revealed that both intermittent, low-carbohydrate diets were superior to the standard, daily Mediterranean diet in reducing weight, body fat and [insulin resistance](#). Mean reduction in weight and body fat was roughly 4 kilograms (about 9 pounds) with the intermittent approaches compared with 2.4 kilograms (about 5 pounds) with the standard dietary approach. Insulin resistance reduced by 22 percent with the restricted low-carbohydrate diet and by 14 percent with the "ad lib" low-carbohydrate diet compared with 4 percent with the standard Mediterranean diet.

"It is interesting that the diet that only restricts carbohydrates but allows protein and fats is as effective as the calorie-restricted, low-carbohydrate [diet](#)," Harvie said.

She and her colleagues plan to further study carbohydrate intake and breast cancer. This study was funded by the Genesis [Breast Cancer Prevention Appeal](#) (www.genesisuk.org).

Provided by American Association for Cancer Research

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