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Disclaimer:

We don't dispense general medical advice, despite our commitment to Zero Carb, which is an excellent first response to almost anything that ails you. Some issues will still require medical attention.

If you are currently taking prescription medications, we recommend that you continue these and consult your doctor before you make any changes on your own.

1. What is Zero Carb?

- We eat foods from the animal kingdom.
- We contend that eating only meat and eliminating carbohydrate foods causes the least amount of damage to your body. This allows healing to occur, and this healing can bring weight loss and often relief from **many** illnesses and symptoms related to poor diets.
- Zero carb is not about exact numbers, but we consider the negligible amount of carbohydrates found in meat, eggs, and seafood to be insignificant. We understand the term to mean carnivore, if you prefer, or eliminating all plant foods, in an effort to improve our health.

2. What can I eat?**Optimal** foods include:

- Meat! Beef, veal, pork, chicken, duck, turkey, fish, shellfish, lamb, venison, goat, etc. Organ meat if you enjoy it, liver, kidneys, and such like. Bacon, of course!
- Eggs; as many as you like. Yolks are delicious and good for you.
- Animal fats for cooking: beef fat (tallow), lard, (non-hydrogenated), bacon grease, duck fat, butter, ghee.
- Salt is fine. Some people limit salt; others have no problem with it. Sea salt is optimal if you want to add salt.
- Water.

Less than Optimal foods include:

- Processed meats are allowed, but check labels and avoid sugars, fillers like breadcrumbs, and soy products. We love our bacon around here! Sausage, bacon, ham, pepperoni, and so on, are fine.

- Dairy, full fat, including cheese and heavy cream. Children, who don't have weight to lose or other health issues, can also have whole milk and plain, full fat yogurt. (If you can get them raw milk, even better!)
- **We frequently remind people that are new to this way of eating that including dairy may inhibit weight loss, and may increase your cravings.
We do encourage you to try the first 30 days without any dairy, if you can, and then evaluate how it works for you.*
- Spices, herbs, garlic, etc., even if the label says zero carbs. These can interfere with your true hunger signals. It is possible to eat a lot more meat if it is highly flavored, and you might not be truly hungry. We generally consider these "plant foods" as acceptable for light seasoning, especially as you make the transition to zero carb. Mustard or hot pepper sauce are acceptable.
- Coffee is tricky and is considered less than optimal! Caffeine will inhibit your hunger signals and can mess with your insulin response. Do **not** use coffee in place of a meal; this includes bullet proof coffee. Eat some meat first, and then have coffee afterwards, if you must. Drink it black, or heavy cream is fine, if you have decided to include dairy. Many, many people use coffee as an appetite suppressant and are not even aware of this. If you drink coffee in the morning and are not hungry for hours, the coffee needs to go. Eat!
- Tea seems to have a lesser effect than coffee, but drink it black and be aware of the effects on hunger.
- Alcohol will lower your inhibitions and you might easily eat foods that you wouldn't otherwise consider. Alcohol interferes with weight loss and is not recommended for anyone trying to lose weight. You will notice that it takes a lesser amount of alcohol to give you a "buzz" the longer you are on zero carbs. Choose dry red wines or the clear hard stuff, like vodka and soda water, if you must.
- Mayonnaise made with vegetable oil. Many people object to the soybean oil that is used in commercial mayonnaise. Others still include mayo now and then for tuna salad or deviled eggs or such like. If these foods help you stick to zero carb, you may include mayo. Some people make their own mayonnaise and there are many recipes around here. You can experiment if you like that sort of thing. We generally focus on animal fats and that is part of the objection to mayonnaise made with vegetable oils. It is included here as less than optimal, but acceptable. Your mileage may vary.

- Coconut oil. Yes, it is from a plant, and most of us don't bother to include it anymore – we prefer animal fats. If you think coconut oil is superior and can't let it go, it certainly is a better choice than any other vegetable oils. Coconut oil is also wonderful for topical uses!
- Foods on this “**Less than Optimal**” list are subject to your own discovery of how these foods affect you. If you are struggling with the transition and find it difficult to eat another hamburger patty without a slice of cheese, go ahead and have a cheeseburger. If you start with one slice of cheese and end up eating 12 slices instead of having meat, then you need to drop the cheese for now.
If you are not losing weight or not seeing other improvements after several weeks, look to this list of less than optimal foods and consider whether they should be off-limits for you.

Not included and not recommended:

- **NO** sugar, artificial sweeteners, natural sweeteners, honey; **NOTHING** that tastes sweet. Stevia, sucralose, diet sodas, saccharine, 0-calorie flavored drinks, energy drink: even if the label says “zero carbs” we highly recommend that you do not include any of these products.
Any taste of something sweet will keep your cravings alive and can also interfere with your insulin response.
Artificial sweeteners appear to be as addictive, if not more so, than regular sugar! This may be one of the most difficult things to give up but you will see so many benefits and improvements if you remove these products from your diet.
- No fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, seeds, or vegetable oils, including olive oil.
- No protein shakes or protein bars, no matter the ingredients. We eat meat – real food. No need for highly processed powders as a meal replacement.

3. Will I get healthier eating only meat?

- We certainly believe that you will!

Will my particular illness/condition be cured?

- We can't promise that! Many symptoms related to inflammation, to metabolic issues, or from a mixed diet (carbs!) can certainly be reduced.
We have seen many people reduce or even reverse symptoms of diabetes, for example, as well as Lyme disease, chronic fatigue, skin conditions, candida overgrowth, hormonal imbalances, depression, pain and inflammation, digestive troubles; the list is long!

The only way to know is to try this for yourself. Zero carb will not cure everything; we are not promising that. You are here for a reason, however, and maybe this seems like a last, drastic effort – but if what you have been doing up until this point is not working, what do you have to lose?

4. What about fiber?

What about poop? I think I'm constipated! Does anyone else have diarrhea?

- This seems to be one of our most frequent questions! People love to talk about poop, apparently. 😊
- You do not need fiber if you are not eating carbohydrates. We recommend reading ***Fiber Menace***, by Konstantin Monastyrsky for further information. It will change all you thought you knew about fiber and its role in our bodies.
- We can say with certainty that your bowel habits WILL change on a zero carb diet, especially if you have been previously consuming a lot of plant foods.
- You may experience a cessation or reduction in bowel movements for the first several days; this is not normally considered constipation. True constipation or fecal impaction is a painful and serious condition and you should see a physician if you are in pain.
- It is perfectly normal to not have a bowel movement every day. Eating only animal foods produces less waste, so it makes sense that less waste will be eliminated.
- It is more likely that you may experience loose stools or diarrhea in the early days of adapting to this lifestyle. This is also normal as your body adapts to more fat and no plant fiber slowing things down.
- We generally do not recommend any over-the-counter or natural remedies for either of these situations.
- If you are feeling fatigued and have had no bowel movement in several days, you may want to consider if you are eating enough food, and you also might benefit from fattier meats, like ground beef, dark chicken with the skin, (Thighs and legs), or steak. Fat helps things MOVE!
- If you experience nausea and/or diarrhea, you might want to choose leaner meat for a meal or two, like sirloin steak, white meat chicken, or eggs, until things settle down.
- These symptoms generally lessen and naturally resolve on their own. Trust the process!

5. What can I expect during the early days of eating this way?

- We refer to the early days of this plan as an adaptation period.
- See [section 4](#), above, first of all.
- Many people experience one or more of the following symptoms:

Headaches (these will likely be worse if you are also giving up caffeine and/or artificial sweeteners.)

Fatigue, lightheadedness

Some people actually report an increase in energy levels

Nausea, loss of appetite, diarrhea, reduced frequency of bowel movements

Muscle cramps, often in the lower legs or feet

- Most of these symptoms are resolved within a few days, but may last up to a month or 6 weeks as you adapt.
- Take some over-the-counter medicine for headaches, if that helps you get through the initial days. (Ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or whatever works for you. This should be a temporary measure.)
- Make sure to get enough sleep. Rest when you are tired, if at all possible.
- Drink water when you are thirsty.
- Hang in there! It gets much better – more energy, better quality sleep, improved digestion, reduced pain levels – many of these are also reported in the first several weeks!

6. How much protein and fat should I eat?

- We don't find it necessary to measure grams of fat or protein. If you come from a way of eating that focused on exact ratios, you will find this liberating!
- Our emphasis is on eating meat. We don't eat protein or fat – we just eat meat. 😊
- We like to keep it simple. Eat meat when you are hungry and stop eating when you are no longer hungry. Choose meat that you enjoy and don't fret about the ratios.
- There is no need to either keep your protein low or to add extra fat to your meals. Most meat is fatty enough!

Fat is good for you, but don't take this to an extreme and pour fat all over your meals. (Yes, this happens!) If your diet is exclusively white meat chicken with no skin, lean beef, or white fish, you will find yourself hungry very quickly. Consider adding some fattier meats, like dark meat chicken with the (yummy!) skin, fattier fish like mackerel and salmon, and beef cuts like chuck or ribs, or ground beef that is marked 80/20 or even 73/27.

We realize that people in other countries may not have access to the same fatty cuts of beef that we have in the US. In these cases, you have to do the best you can. Look for lamb or duck, if you can; these are fatty and sometimes comparable in price to leaner cuts of beef.

7. What about ketosis and measuring ketones?

Aren't there proven health benefits if I stay in deep ketosis?

- We have read the literature on ketones, ketosis, and keto diets. Many of our members were successful for a time on these types of diets. There certainly is evidence that ketogenic diets can be beneficial in improving health.
- Eating only meat **also** provides health benefits and we consider it a simpler method, with no testing or measuring or aiming for a certain ratio of fats to proteins.
- Our emphasis is on eating meat. ***We don't eat protein or fat – we just eat meat.*** 😊
- It is likely that you may be in ketosis as you adapt to this way of eating. Most people eating only meat will stop showing any measurable ketones as they adapt, and yet they are still losing weight and are feeling fantastic. So why bother measuring?
- If you find it helpful to measure ketones in the beginning, by all means, record your progress.
- Understand that we don't find it necessary to aim for a certain number, and those of us who have been on a zero carb diet for longer than 6 months don't worry at all about ketosis.
- Search the site and links (below) for more scientific information on ketosis.

8. What about vitamins?

Don't I need to take supplements?

What about scurvy; there is no vitamin C in meat?

- There are multiple links and discussions on these topics. We have heard them all!
- Most veteran zero carbers (3+ years) take few, if any, supplements.
- The absence of carbohydrates in the diet lessens the need for vitamin/mineral supplementation. Carbohydrates, especially sugar and grains, along with vegetables, can cause a vitamin/mineral deficiency, whereas in the absence of these foods, there is no longer a deficiency.
- Keep reading and search the group for these topics.

9. What about exercise?

Don't I need to exercise to lose weight?

I love to exercise; will zero carb help my performance?

- If you are here to lose weight or heal from health issues, we recommend that you do not exercise. Yes, this is contradictory to conventional advice!
- Your body needs to heal. If you are overweight or obese, this is considered internal starvation. Your cells are not getting the fuel they need and you likely have some measure of insulin resistance.

- Exercise takes a toll on the healing process. Eat meat and rest. When you become healthier, you will have more energy and you will want to get out and move. This might be in a few months, or it might take longer.
- Exercise can interfere with weight loss. It makes you hungry, for one thing!
- If you are already at the weight you are happy with and you want to continue lift weights or run marathons, or similar, you must make sure you eat enough food. In some cases, this means a specific reminder to even eat when you are not hungry, in some cases. Exercise often has the effect of suppressing your appetite, but this is only for a day or two. Your body needs fuel!
- You may experience a drop in your performance while you adapt. This is normal, and you need to go with it and reduce your expectations for a time. The energy will return and you will find you have all the resources needed for your exercise.
- We have many veterans who do no formal exercise at all and they have lost weight and look fantastic and have all the energy they require for their jobs or whatever they need to do.
- We also some veterans that lift weights, run ½ marathons or even super marathons. Zero carb can accomplish all of this!

10. Should I eat only grass-fed meat?

What about the hormones and antibiotics in meat?

Isn't grass fed beef healthier than grain finished beef?

What about the inhumane conditions in feedlots and the grain that they feed to cattle?

Isn't that a concern?

- We have discussed and researched these topics thoroughly. We have members here at ZIOH who are farmers and cattle ranchers.
- Many of the zero carb veterans choose to eat conventional, "supermarket" beef and they are in excellent health. We feel that the nutritional profile is equal to organic or grass-fed beef, we prefer the taste, and we find it to be a better value.
- Some members do choose organic, grass-fed, and/or locally raised meats. They prefer this meat, or live near farmers/butchers and can purchase meat directly from these sources.
- There are many discussion threads with comments and links available on this subject. In hindsight, probably neither side has ever convinced the other side of their position; it is often a highly-charged debate around the ZIOH pages.
- Here are some basic facts:
All cows are raised on grass and hay for approximately 18 months to three years;

Cows are sold to feedlots where they are given some grains for several weeks to fatten them before slaughter;

No antibiotics are allowed to be present in beef that goes to market;

Grass-finished beef often has a different flavor than grain-finished, but the final nutritional profile is similar.

Ranchers and beef farmers would not make money if they raised weak, sickly cows. It is in their best interests to raise healthy cows.

- Our stance is that we contend that a person can be perfectly healthy eating conventionally-raised meat. Everyone must make their own choices for themselves and their families.

11. Help, I'm gaining weight!

- It is not uncommon for some people to gain weight in the early days of zero carb.
- This weight gain may only be temporary, and it is dependent on your state of health before you began. If you were on a restricted-calorie diet, if you exercised heavily, if you have recently gained or lost a lot of weight, or if you are dealing with an eating disorder, your body may be in a state of internal starvation.
- If you are above your ideal weight (this number is elusive!) the weight gain in the beginning days or weeks will likely correct itself. There are many members who have experienced this (somewhat disconcerting!) temporary weight gain who are now at a lower weight and much healthier. Kelly is our most famous member in this category – here is a link to her blog entry about her journey : [When Lowering Carbs Causes Weight Gain](#).
- A zero carb lifestyle will help your body heal and find its way to optimal health. This is one of the times we ask you to trust the process. Do not try and reduce portions in order to lose weight – this is counter-intuitive to the zero carb mentality.

12. Are there any books about Zero Carb?

Is there scientific support for this diet?

- There are not currently any books that are concentrated on Zero Carb eating.
- We found most of our research in areas that were focused on low carb diets; there are no contemporary, scientific studies on people eating an exclusive zero carb diet.
- Many of discovered zero carb by trial and error! We were familiar with low carb diets and found that we felt even better as the carbs were kept lower.

Dr. Atkins' "induction phase" recommends very low carbohydrate levels, for example, and instead of adding carbs back in as the diet progresses, many people stayed at the early level of carbs and had success.

So even though there wasn't literature (or an online support group!) we made these discoveries for ourselves and kept going.

- Books we recommend:
 - Good Calories, Bad Calories***, by Gary Taubes (This is an exhaustive volume that challenges “the conventional wisdom on diet, weight control, and disease.”)
 - Why We Get Fat***, by Gary Taubes. (Published a few years after GCBC, simpler format, not quite as daunting in size and tone.)
 - Fiber Menace***, by Konstantin Monastyrsky. (Challenges everything you learned about fiber, constipation, IBS, etc.)
 - The Vegetarian Myth***, by Lierre Keith. (Discusses agriculture and how the recent farming practices have altered the climate and destroyed the topsoil. Keith is a former vegetarian.)
- [The Stefansson Bellevue experiment](#) – link to the pdf.
- [The Bear thread](#). Owsley Stanley ate a zero carb diet for 50 years.
- Some recommended links for further reading:
 - [Zero Carb Health.com](#) – Our companion website
 - [The Ketogenic Diet for Health](#)– LOTS of science and explanations for why this diet works.
 - [High Steaks.com](#) – Lots of fun and low carb science on Ash Simmonds’ site.
 - [Is Red Meat Healthy?](#) An article about red meat on Georgia Ede’s site (she doesn’t fully promote zero carb, but she knows her stuff!).

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