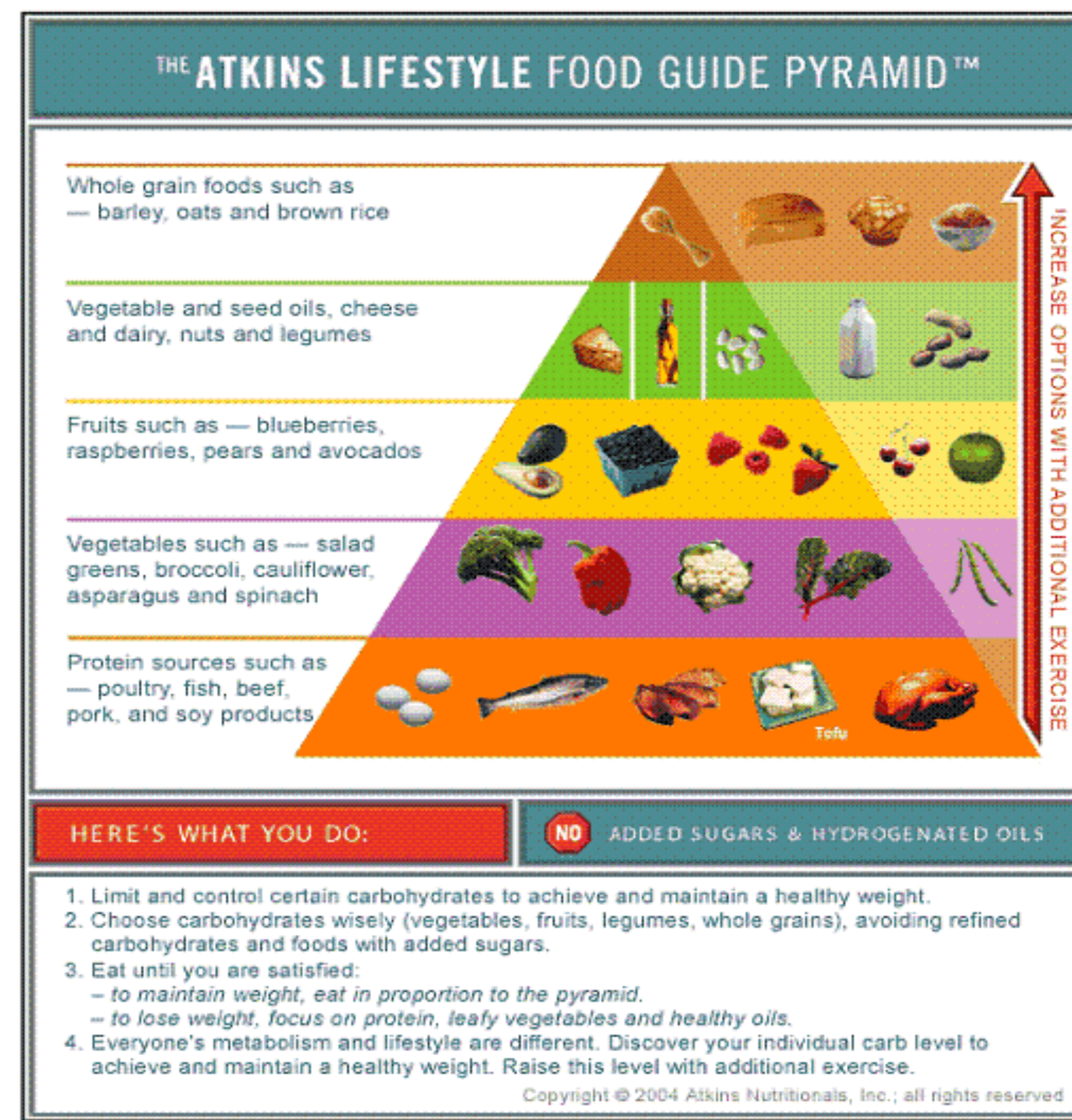


The Atkins Diet Revaluation

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Abstract

In America, corporate marketing is not only about selling products but also advertising life styles that exploit rising obesity rates in the United States. Like many other “fad” diets, the Atkins Diet is marketed for health and weight loss but is successful at selling products rather than providing health. The method used to evaluate the Atkins Diet in this study encompassed both commercial literature and peer-reviewed literature from scientific journals. The commercial literature I surveyed proved the importance of using vague and evasive language when marketing an unhealthy product like the Atkins Diet. The peer-reviewed literature on the Atkins Diet and other low-carb, high-protein diets found that one side effect of the Atkins Diet is weight loss in the first two weeks. However, this weight loss is caused by dehydration and is detrimental to the health of dieters. People who are interested in living a long, healthy, and affordable life should not go on or experiment with the Atkins Diet.

Introduction

Over 50% of Americans are overweight and although Americans spend a gross average of 33 billion dollars a year on weight loss products, the American obesity epidemic continues to grow. [10, 8] The Atkins Diet is a sort of apotheosis for the Low-carb and fad-diet prevalence in our culture. Because the Atkins Diet both a fad, a diet, and a corporation, it is important for public health to determine if the lifestyle that is being marketed by Atkins Nutritionals, the corporation which markets the diet, is safe and healthy for consumers.

Method

The research method employed in this study is a comparison between research conducted on low-carb diets by scientists that have been published in peer-reviewed journals like *American Academy of Family Physicians* and the information published by Atkins Nutritionals.

Primary research findings

The Atkins diet was designed by Dr. Atkins in the 1960s. In 1972 the book, *Dr. Atkins Diet Revolution*, was published. There are four stages in the Atkins Diet: Introduction, Ongoing weight loss, Pre-maintenance, and Lifetime maintenance. In the introduction phase dieters are restricted to consuming 20 g of carbohydrates per day and are allowed to eat up to 113 g of high-protein foods like meat, fish, eggs and cheese per day. The aim of this phase is that the body will enter ketosis. In the second phase, dieters increase their intake of carbohydrates by 2 g a day until they are within ten pounds of their weight goal. In this phase, dieters are supposed to find what Dr. Atkins refers to in his book as their, “critical carbohydrate level for losing.” In addition, dieters should add the 9 rungs outlined by the book that had been prohibited in the first stage. [table 1] In the third phase dieters increase their net carbohydrate intake by 10 g per week until they find what the book refers to as the, “critical carbohydrate level for maintenance.” The last phase is intended to prevent dieters from slipping into the post-weight loss mind set—that the dieter can return to their old life style once their desired weight loss has been achieved.

The book, *Dr. Atkins Diet Revolution*, attests that the number one cause of obesity in the United States is consumption of refined carbohydrates like sugar and flour. It also claims that it is more important for dieters to avoid trans-fats than saturated fats. Dr. Atkin’s solution to obesity caused by consumption of refined carbohydrates and trans-fats is centered on reducing consumption of refined carbohydrates, and thus causing the body to enter lipolysis and ketosis because the body is being deprived of glucose. Because of this, the diet focuses on restricting carbohydrates that affect blood sugar levels. Although the Atkins Diet encourages exercise and multivitamin intake, the diet is more focused on dieting rather than other weight loss strategies like exercise

- Induction acceptable
- vegetables
- Fresh dairy
- Nuts
- Berries
- Alcohol
- Legumes
- Other fruits
- Starchy vegetables
- Grains

Table 1

References

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Results

Clinical research has shown that low-carbohydrate diets are nutritionally deficient. Vitamins A, B, C and E, thiamine, foliate, calcium, magnesium, iron, potassium and fiber usually did not meet dietary standards. Although multivitamins can help alleviate nutrient deficiency, it is not possible to replace all the necessary nutrients that dieters should be receiving from food with multivitamins [5]. Even if the diet is accompanied by multivitamins, the Atkins Diet causes increased uric acid and consequently can cause constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, headaches, insomnia, kidney stones and nausea [5].

In 2006, the peer-reviewed journal of *American Family Physicians* published an article stating:

Short-term studies which compared low-fat diets with low-carbohydrate diets showed lower triglyceride levels, higher high-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels, similar low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels, and lower A1c[Glycate Hemoglobin] levels in persons on the Atkins diet. These studies showed that low-carbohydrate diets resulted in more weight loss in the first three and six months than in low-fat diets. However, after a year, there was no significant difference in maintained weight loss [8]

Clinical studies have shown that people on the Atkins diet tend to lose an average of 4 to 10 pounds within the first week. However, there is strong evidence that the initial weight lost is mostly the result of water loss [10]. When a dieter increases protein consumption at the expense of carbohydrates, glycogenolysis occurs and consequently diuresis is induced and expels glycogen. Glycogen is polymer and an important source of the body’s short-term energy which bonds to water at the rate of 2 to 4 g of water per gram of glycogen. The increased glycogen loss is a large source of water and weight loss caused by the Atkins Diet.

Because a large amount of weight loss caused by the Atkins Diet is the result of water loss induced by carbohydrate deprivation, when a dieter begins the later stages of the Atkins Diet, dieters usually gain at least as much weight as they lost in the first stage of the diet.

Discussion

The literature provided by Atkins Nutritionals and peer-reviewed journals about the Atkins Diet show that there is a conflict of interest between scientists and Atkins Nutritionals. Whereas Atkins Nutritionals aims to support the claim that the Atkins Diet is safe and effective, peer-reviewed journals aim to provide unbiased information about the diet. It is important for consumers to be cautious of evasive information utilized by corporations like Atkins Nutritionals in order to sell their products. The official web site of Atkins Nutritionals has several links to clinical research related to the Atkins Diet. For Example, there is a link that is supposed to take you to an article printed in the *Journal of American Medical Association*, which states: “Atkins Diet causes more weight loss than other diets”. However, when you click this link, it takes you to Toby Smith’s, an Atkins Nutritionals CEO, review of the article rather than the article itself. Although Toby Smith does not make false claims in his summery, he exempts important information from the article like the fact that most people who go on the Atkins Diet suffer from nutrient deficiency.

In addition to being ineffective, the Atkins Diet is also expensive. According to the *Forbs Magazine*, Atkins Nutritional products are among the most expensive health food products, out-pricing Weight Watchers, the Zone, and the South Beach Diet products. [11]