

LOW CARBOHYDRATE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

Expanding from the anti-inflammatory benefits of the traditional Mediterranean diet, **the Low CHO Med Diet deepens the improvements on insulin sensitivity** – this means less energy dense, high glycaemic load (GL) carbohydrates alongside the benefits of whole foods rich in antioxidants, dietary fibre, and an ideal ratio of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid (PUFA) for anti-inflammatory affects.

The purpose of a Low Carbohydrate Mediterranean Diet is to:

- 1 Promote eating habits and foods that support healthy blood glucose stability, and reduce inflammation.
- 2 Provide ongoing, non-restrictive, nourishing food choices for prevention and treatment of conditions that can stem from insulin resistance and metabolic inflammation including:
 - Diabetes
 - High cholesterol
 - Poor memory/brain fog
 - Hormonal imbalance
 - Polycystic ovarian syndrome
 - High blood pressure
 - Obesity
 - Low mood states
 - Vasomotor symptoms (hot flushes)
 - Osteoporosis, heart disease, dementia (prevention)



What to expect from these dietary changes

As old eating habits change, initial symptoms including headache, fatigue or changes to bowel motions may be experienced. This is the body naturally detoxifying and clearing toxins mostly associated with refined sugar, caffeine, and alcohol – these commonly resolve within 48-72 hours.

Move from a place of nurture, rather than restriction. Those with insulin resistance may also notice changes to hunger. Slow down, take time to prioritise, plan and prepare nourishing, whole food meals. Keeping hydrated and ensuring adequate sleep and exercise will also ease adaptation to change. The long term benefits of flattening your glucose curves will result in less hunger, fewer cravings, better energy and sleep, greater immune resilience, improved gut health, and slower ageing.



How do I know this diet is right for me?

The Low CHO Med Diet provides guidance for preventing or improving blood sugar balance and associated health outcomes. It can also work well alongside medical interventions, supplementation, and lifestyle modifications.

While the focus of this diet is to promote the inclusion of nutrient diverse, phytochemical rich, anti-inflammatory wholefoods it may also limit some foods, such as those rich in carbohydrates. These are needed for many processes in the body including energy and brain functioning – the trick is to get the right source and balance on our plate. With any dietary change, it is important that all dietary requirements are fulfilled - **always consult with a healthcare practitioner to ensure individual nutritional needs are being met.**

Connect food with feeling

To gain a better understanding of real-time response to foods, consider wearing a continuous glucose monitor, where the goal is to stabilise (or flatten) the post-prandial curve. Aim to avoid a glucose spike of more than 1.7nmol/L from baseline within an hour of eating.

It is best to test your own body's response before restricting foods. Some people will find their glucose will spike even from eating healthy wholefoods particularly certain fruits, sweet potato, or oats,

and some will not. Depending on your individual results, you can determine which vegetables, fruits, and wholegrains you can eat with the lowest blood sugar spike. **Note:** poor sleep and stress will amplify glucose spikes.

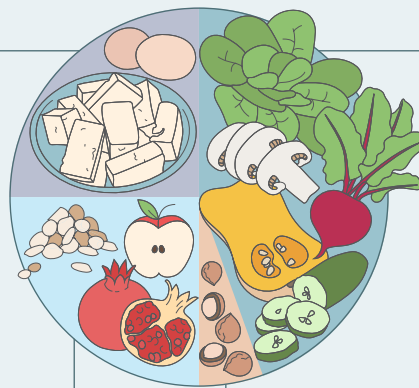
A diet diary can also be useful, not only to record food intake but also energy levels, exercise, mood, and sleep – to track progress alongside dietary improvements.

WHERE TO BEGIN?

- 1 Take time to explore the following recommendations slowly and within your individual capacity
- 2 Set small attainable goals, starting with improving macronutrient ratio intake
- 3 Focus on including adequate protein, plenty of veggies and plant-based fibre, the right ratio of carbohydrates alongside healthy fats with each meal

25% PROTEIN

1-2g protein/kg of body weight/day or aim for a total of 65g/day. An approximate portion size, can roughly be equivalent to the size of your palm.



45% VEGETABLES

Aim for a rainbow of variety, to optimise essential micronutrients and antioxidants. Prepare as a salad or lightly steamed.

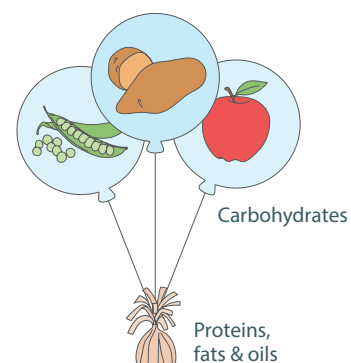
25% COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES

From wholegrains, fruits, and vegetables. Provides soluble fibre and resistant starch for satiety, healthy gut bacteria and hormone metabolism.


5% ADDITIONAL HEALTHY FATS

For valuable fat-soluble nutrients and essential fatty acids. Can take in the form of ½ an avocado, a handful of raw nuts and seeds, a sprinkle of dressing.

Carbohydrates can be likened to a balloon, while proteins, fats and oils are like anchors. Without the anchors, the balloon will fly too high (and eventually run out of air and crash), while anchors without the balloon will sink. Combining wholefood sources of protein, carbohydrates and healthy fats and oils to form meals and snacks will help to keep blood sugar levels more stable, as well as aid satiety and contentment.



FOODS TO AVOID AND ENJOY

FOOD GROUP	ENJOY	AVOID
 Vegetables*	Aim to include 5 or more cups per day (non-starchy vegetables): leafy greens (Asian greens, endive), broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, cucumber, garlic, carrot, asparagus, celery, kale, zucchini, green beans, mushroom, radish, fennel, asparagus. Include starchy vegetables as part of a complex carbohydrate serve: sweet potatoes, pumpkin, beetroot, corn.	<p><i>Solanaceae</i> family vegetables can be inflammatory in those who are sensitive: tomatoes, eggplants, potatoes, capsicum, chilli.</p> <p>Note: Depending on individual response, your practitioner may advise avoiding starchy vegetables – this will be a short-term strategy to improve insulin sensitivity.</p>
 Fruits*	No more than 2 serves per day: avocado, berries, pear, apple, banana, citrus, stone fruits, pomegranate, grapefruit, passion fruit, cherries, grapes, dates, figs, melons.	<p>Dried fruits, fruit juices.</p> <p>Note: Depending on individual response, your practitioner may advise limiting fruit intake to avocado or berries – this will be a short-term strategy to improve insulin sensitivity.</p>
 Fish	Aim for at least 2 serves of fatty fish per week from small, sustainably farmed or wild caught fish: sardines, anchovy, herring, whiting, wild caught Atlantic salmon, ocean trout, blue-eyed cod, bream, snapper, John Dory, flathead, mackerel.	<p>Limit to no more than once per week: barramundi, gemfish, ling, fresh bluefin or albacore tuna, halibut, mahi mahi, sea bass. Best avoided due to potential methyl-mercury content: sword fish, marlin, shark (flake), orange roughy, catfish.</p>
 Other protein sources	Mostly plant-based proteins: legumes, nuts/seeds, tempeh, free-range, organic chicken, eggs, turkey, grass-fed organic red meat 1-2 times per week.	<p>Red meat especially charred or BBQ meat, fried proteins.</p>
 Legumes	Chickpeas, kidney beans, cannellini beans, lentils, fava beans, pulses. Ensure washed and soaked thoroughly prior to cooking.	<p>Peanuts, canned legumes.</p>
 Fats and oils	Fatty fish, chia, hemp, or flax seeds for long chain omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs), avocado, tahini, olives, extra virgin olive oil (EVOO), coconut oil, sesame seed oil for monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs).	<p>Trans and saturated fatty acids from fried foods, deli meats, or products that contain vegetable oils such as mayonnaise and margarine. Avoid cooking in oil – apply it after cooking. If cooking requires oil, choose coconut, ghee, or olive.</p>
 Grains	Oats, rye, spelt, sourdough, gluten free pseudo grains such as buckwheat, quinoa, amaranth, brown, long grain or basmati rice, coconut flour, psyllium. Note: Depending on individual response, your practitioner may advise avoiding some of these grains - this will be a short-term strategy to improve insulin sensitivity.	<p>Reduce gluten intake or eliminate if required: refined, gluten-containing flours and grains including wheat, spelt, barley, semolina, non-gluten free oats or 'quick oats'. White rice, rice cakes, sweetened muesli, or cereal.</p>
 Nuts & seeds	Raw nuts or seeds: almonds, cashews, pistachios, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, hazelnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin, sunflower, chia, sesame, flax.	<p>Peanuts, nuts or seeds that are roasted or salted.</p>
 Dairy & dairy alternatives	Haloumi, fetta, Greek yoghurt, unsweetened dairy alternatives with minimal processing or additives: coconut yogurt, nut, or seed milk.	<p>Reduce dairy intake or eliminate if required, processed 'low fat' milks, cheese, yoghurts – these will often be higher in sugar and salt.</p>
 Condiments	Tamari, pesto, dukkha, tahini, lemon juice, vinaigrette, capers.	<p>All, as they will often be processed or include hidden sugars: jams, processed spreads and sauces.</p>
 Herbs & spices	All, preferably organic, especially anti-inflammatory spices: ginger, turmeric, cinnamon.	<p>Chilli/cayenne, paprika .</p>
 Beverages	Filtered water, organic spring water, sparkling mineral water, herbal tea*, green tea, ginger, peppermint, turmeric latte, fresh vegetable juice.	<p>Coffee and caffeinated beverages, alcohol, soft drinks, fruit juice.</p>
 Sweeteners	Occasional small serves of: stevia, organic, raw, dairy free 80-85% dark chocolate or cacao, raw honey, maple syrup, unrefined coconut sugar.	<p>Table sugar, sweets, soft drinks, high-fructose corn syrup, artificial sweeteners, baked goods, pre-packaged, ultra-processed snack-foods: ice cream, custard, jellies, muesli bars, chips, chocolate, biscuits, crackers, rice/corn cakes, cereals.</p>

**Seasonal, fair trade and organic (when possible)*

SAMPLE LOW CHO MED DIET



Upon rising:

A squeeze of lemon/lime in room temperature water.

Breakfast:

Option 1: Soaked chia seeds with stewed pear, or fresh berries; a small handful of walnuts or chopped almonds, hemp, and sunflower seeds; and a slather of flaxseed oil. Add a scoop of coconut or Greek yoghurt and a sprinkle of cinnamon.

Option 2: Blend chia seeds, with some blueberries, spinach, celery, tahini, some matcha green tea powder and cinnamon in 125 mL of coconut milk or water.

Optional: Add ½ tbsp of coconut yoghurt.

Lunch:

Steam some green beans. Once cooled, add some fresh salmon, 1 boiled egg, some anchovies, basil and black olives. Sprinkle dressing on top just before serving*.

Optional: add tomato.

***Dressing recipe:** Mix 2 tbsp EVOO, juice of half a lemon or 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar with sea salt and black pepper to taste. **Optional extras:** herbs, spices, tamari or seeded mustard to taste.

Dinner:

Marinate some turkey breasts in half the mixture overnight[†]. Drain and cook. Serve with the remaining marinade and some roasted vegetables (fennel, broccoli, capsicum, red onions, parsnips, carrots, broccoli).

†Marinade recipe: Mix the juice of 2 limes, 2 cloves of garlic, 200g of Greek yoghurt, ½ bunch of coriander, 1 tsp of cumin and 40g of ginger with 2 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil.

The order of what we consume will impact postprandial glucose and insulin levels.



Aim to begin with non-starchy vegetables then protein and healthy fats. Save starchy vegetables and complex carbohydrates to enjoy last.



Consider time restricted eating: give the body a 12-hour break or digestive rest (minimum) from the last meal of the day to the first meal in the morning.



Avoid snacking – when there is adequate protein and fat at a meal, satiety reduces the need for snacking. Distinct meals allows for digestive rest and maintains regular insulin release throughout the day.



Address and avoid inconsistent or skipping meals, eating too late at night, stress, or emotional eating.



Incorporate regular movement or exercise 'use your muscles for 10 minutes after your meals'.