

# THE TWO-WEEK CARB CHALLENGE!

(Take 10 minutes to read this through to the end – it will change your life.)

It's time to see what you're made of! For the next two weeks, we're going to turn your food world upside down. Get ready to feel drastically better, experience improved energy and likely lose some substantial weight in the process!

## WHY TRY THE CHALLENGE?

Very few people can tolerate many carbohydrates in their diet, but they don't know this is true because we've all been force-fed inaccurate information our entire lives and created a culture where it seems strange to NOT have carbs as a main staple of our diet! But alas, this is not the case – there is no such thing as an essential carbohydrate.

Carbohydrate Intolerance is probably a phrase you've never even heard before, but it's easily the most prevalent cause of most “Western Diseases” (chronic fatigue, elevated triglycerides and LDL “bad” cholesterol, lowered HDL “good” cholesterol, increased body fat, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, metabolic syndrome, even cancer). It truly is an epidemic in Western Society and across most of the world.

You may think this is crazy: How on earth could something so ‘normal’ be so dangerous? Even most health authorities tell us to eat a diet consisting of more than 50% carbohydrates! But remember, *9 out of 10 doctors used to recommend smoking Camel's over other cigarettes, too.*

But let's not worry about the bureaucracy or the ‘shoulds’ of nutrition right now. I promise the challenge you'll embark upon is in no way dangerous and you'll be able to determine how YOU feel about it after two short weeks. Then, we can reintroduce some healthier carbs into your diet, if you so desire.

You will actually *feel* what it's like to have normal insulin levels, optimal blood sugar and, in many cases, be free (finally) of ailments and symptoms associated with carb-loaded diets — all in a very short time frame. I don't want to TELL you how you'd feel; I want you to EXPERIENCE it. Do not believe a word I say, until you try it, for only two weeks.

## THE TWO-WEEK TEST

Please try to refrain from thinking of this as a conventional “diet”. In no way, do I want to infer like some infomercial that you'll be swimsuit ready and then go back to what you were eating, and you'll stay slim – that's just absurd. I'm not promoting any “diet” in the way we're used to thinking of them. Please don't call it a diet.

Instead, think of it as a simple TEST. We're going to alter your eating to include some foods and exclude others. There will be no calorie counting or hunger. At the end of the two weeks, YOU will compare how you feel (and measure up) with how you felt two weeks earlier. THEN, you will have three choices:

- Continue eating like this.
- Throw it all out and go back to how you were eating like nothing ever happened
- Slowly reintroduce some of the healthier, previously-excluded foods in a smart way, which I'll discuss.

## SO, LET'S GET TO IT ALREADY!

### Pre-Challenge Checklist:

1. **Record health problems.** Include any symptoms or ailments that you might have including things like insomnia, headaches, acid reflux, regularity, congestion, joint pain, fatigue and others. Feel free to update this list for a few days as ailments come to mind. I'd recommend rating each on a scale of 1-10, with 1=barely noticeable and 10=unbearable. You will review these complaints after the test to see which ones have and haven't improved.
2. **Weigh yourself.** This provides an important sign of how your body is working, especially after the test. You may lose some excess water (which will show on the scale), but your fat-burning will improve and you'll start losing body fat (which won't show on the scale) and shouldn't be the end-all evaluation of the challenge (if you want to measure fat loss and other biometrics, here's the scale I use: <https://amzn.to/2Lkt2eO>). It's possible to lose anywhere between a few and 20 pounds during this test. Don't be alarmed if more weight melts away than you expected.
3. **Stock up on the right foods.** Before you start, make sure you have enough of the foods you'll be eating. (from the YES foods below.) Also, go through your cabinets and refrigerator and get rid of any sweets, foods containing any sugar, and all breads and products made from refined flour. Temptation can set you up to fail the challenge if you're not proactive. Set yourself up to Win!
4. **Plan Wisely.** Schedule the challenge during a two-week period in which you are relatively unlikely to have distractions. (Don't attempt the challenge during holidays, for example.) Don't worry about cholesterol, fat, calories, or the amount of food you're eating.

### \*\*IMPORTANT RULE\*\*

Following the challenge for less than two weeks probably will not give you a valid result. So, if after five days, for example, you eat a bowl of pasta or a box of cookies, you will need to start the challenge over.

## DURING THE CHALLENGE: THE MENU

The most important thing about the foods below aren't the foods *themselves*, but rather their properties. This challenge is all about eating unprocessed "real" foods that are low in carbohydrates. You can assume any foods that are similar to what you find on the YES list can be eaten. With any foods on the NO list (e.g. potatoes), you can assume that similar foods (sweet, russet, and gold potatoes and yams) also *cannot* be eaten.

## YES Foods

You **MAY** eat as much of the following foods as you like during the Two-Week Carb Challenge.

### Animal Foods

- **Beef, Lamb, Turkey**, (unprocessed, no sugar-added)
- **Eggs**
- **Shellfish**
- **Fish** - Wild-caught cold-water fish (tuna, salmon, etc) are best.

### Plant Foods

- **Raw and cooked vegetables:** Tomato, onion, garlic, greens such as spinach, kale, chard, and all lettuces, broccoli, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts, carrots, zucchini, etc.
- **Tree nuts (and nut butters):** Macadamia, almond, walnut, for example. (Does NOT include peanuts or cashews).
- **Coconut:** cream, oil, milk and flour.

### Dairy

- **Unprocessed Hard Cheeses:** Cheddar, asiago, parmesan, etc.
- **Unprocessed Soft Cheeses:** Feta, brie, camembert, mozzarella, etc.
- **Cream:** Heavy cream, sour cream, full-fat crème fraiche.

### Fats

- **Oils:** Avocado, coconut, and olive oil.

### Drinks

- **Vegetable Juice.**
- **Coffee or tea:** If you usually drink it.
- **Vinegar:** balsamic, apple-cider, etc.
- **Pure, distilled spirits:** Small amounts of gin, vodka, whiskey.
- **Dry red wines:** Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Cab Franc, Shiraz/Syrah, Chianti.
- **Dry white wines:** Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc.

**\*\*Note:** use alcohol sparingly, since alcohol in excess is turned to sugar in the liver when it cannot be processed fast enough. For only two weeks, I recommend avoiding alcohol completely for accurate assessments.

# **NO Foods**

You may **NOT** eat any of the following foods during the Two-Week Carb Challenge.

## **PLANTS**

- **All sugar products:** Includes basically anything with *honey, sugar, agave, fructose, crystals (e.g. beet crystals), cane, extract, or syrup* in its ingredient list.
- **Sweets and desserts:** Cake, cookies, ice cream, muffins, candy, gum, breath mints.
- **All non-caloric sweeteners (natural and non-natural):** Includes stevia, xylitol, erythritol, aspartame, splenda, etc.
- **Many canned and prepared veggies:** Read the labels to make sure they don't contain hidden sugars!
- **Bread:** Sliced bread or rolls of any kind (whole-grain, multi-grain, flaxseed, rye, gluten-free, etc).
- **Pasta:** All types.
- **Crackers:** Includes chips, rice cakes, and similar foods.
- **Packaged energy bars:** And all packaged foods promoted as fuel for athletes.
- **Ketchup and other sauces:** They often contain hidden sugars.
- **Corn:** Bread, tortillas, etc.
- **Rice:** Wild rice, brown rice, white rice, basmati rice, etc.
- **All wheat and wheat products:** Whole wheat, farro, bulgur, khorasan, millet, etc.
- **Quinoa:** Includes quinoa seeds and all products (e.g. quinoa pasta).
- **Potatoes:** Any kind (russet, red, blue, etc.)
- **Fruits and berries:** Bananas, apples, pears, oranges, grapefruits grapes, blueberries, strawberries, cranberries grapefruit, watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew.
- **Legumes:** Beans, lentils, fava beans, peas, chickpeas, peanuts, etc.

## **MEAT**

- **Processed meats:** Sausage, pastrami, salami, pepperoni, etc.
- **Many canned and prepared meats:** Read the labels to make sure they don't contain hidden sugars!

## **DAIRY**

- **Milk:** Especially low-fat and non-fat milk.
- **Half-and-half.**
- **Yogurt and kefir:** All types, *including full-fat yogurt.*
- **Processed cheeses:** Stay away from pre-sliced, single-serving, pre-shredded, etc.

## **FATS**

- Avoid corn, safflower, or canola and other vegetable oils during the test and after. (In fact, NEVER use vegetable oils in your diet, stick to olive or coconut oil)

## **DRINKS**

- **Fruit Juice:** Any type — orange, berry, watermelon, etc.
- **All soda:** diet and non-diet soda.
- **All diet drinks:** Diet shakes, etc.
- **“Enhanced” Beverages:** Vitamin water, mineral water with “health” additives.
- **Sports drinks.**
- **Sweet wines:** liqueur, Champagne, rum, etc.

If it comes in a box, bag, jar or can, there's a good chance it's a no food for the Two-Week Carb Challenge. Be sure to read the ingredients for all packaged foods, as some form of sugar or carbohydrate is typically added. **Better yet, simply avoid all packaged and processed foods for two weeks!**

Now that you know which foods to eat, you can start the Two-Week Carb Challenge! I want to stress, this doesn't have to be your life forever (I can already hear some of you screaming, "Wait, no ketchup?!") but in order to get a valid assessment of the test, it's imperative to take the lists above seriously. C'mon, You can do ANYTHING for only two weeks! (or... can you? Bwahahaha!)

My advice during the Two-Week Carb Challenge, is don't overthink it. You can eat a lot of steaks with salad, eggs and bacon, fish, veggies and drink a lot of water. Just because we might be used to drinking a soda with every meal doesn't mean that it has to be that way. If you need some meal ideas, feel free to google "keto friendly meals." If the ingredients obey the lists above, go for it!

If I might offer another piece of advice to help you succeed in The Two-Week Carb Challenge, it would be this: *Don't negotiate with yourself.* It's only two weeks, so you know you *can* do it because it's such a small amount of time. Nevertheless, you're going to be tempted. I have a friend who says, "100% is a breeze, 99% is a bitch." What he means by that, is when you make something a non-negotiable (like bread for example, "Sorry, I'm not eating bread for two weeks.") you avoid the little negotiation that goes on in your head when you're 99% committed. If you commit to the challenge 99%, you constantly have to 'talk yourself out of the bread' and that drains willpower. Just knock willpower out of the equation by having non-negotiable rules for this two-week period. You can reevaluate those rules later, but for these two weeks, you know the rules and there's no reason to break them, unless you get stranded on a desert island in which case you can start over when you get rescued. 😊

Print off the YES food page and the NO food page, and tape them to your refrigerator for easy reference. There's no reason to overstuff yourself but eat as often and as much as you want from the YES list. And, enjoy the fact that you only have to pay attention to what foods you eat, not how much.

## POST-CHALLENGE TEST TIME!

The Post-Test will determine if any of the carbohydrates you eliminated during the challenge cause the return of any of the original ailments or symptoms, including weight gain. Having just completed the challenge, your body and brain will be more sensitive to the slightest amounts of carbohydrates. You'll become more intuitive to how your body responds to food.

### Step 1: Re-evaluation of symptoms.

Re-evaluate your original list of complaints after the Two-Week Carb Challenge:

- Is your energy better?
- Are you sleeping better?
- Are you feeling less depressed?
- Have you lost inches around your waist?

If you answered “yes” to any of those questions or you lost body fat, you likely have some intolerance to some or all of the carbs we eliminated during the challenge. People who have a high degree of intolerance may feel *dramatically* better, especially if there was a large amount of weight loss.

Any fat loss during the test is not due to reduced calories, but rather to the increased fat-burning resulting from reduced insulin (many people eat more calories than usual during this two-week period, and that's okay!) Although some of the change in weight may be due to water loss, a significant amount will be due to fat loss because your body is a more efficient machine with insulin in check.

**\*\*IMPORTANT:** *If you are on medication for high blood pressure, check or ask your health-care professional to check it several times during the challenge — and especially right after. Sometimes, blood pressure drops significantly, and your medication may need to be adjusted or eliminated — something that should only be done by your health-care professional. As insulin levels fall to normal, high blood pressure typically falls as well.*

If nothing improved during the Two-Week test (and it was done exactly as described above), then you may be one of the few people who can tolerate carbohydrates. But if the test cleared up any of your ailments or symptoms, the next step is to determine how many carbohydrates your body can tolerate without a relapse. This is done by slowly adding a small amount of carbohydrates back into your diet.

## **Step 2: Re-incorporating foods into your diet.**

The best way to add foods back in: Each day, add one serving of one food to your midday meal, starting with No. 1 and working your way down the following list. You want to try *only* one of these different foods per day, meaning that on day two, you do not include servings of food No. 1. And make sure not to go crazy, because it could become easy to lose track of which food caused what!

1. LEGUMES
2. LOW-GLYCEMIC FRUITS (BERRIES, GRAPEFRUIT, PRUNES)
3. MEDIUM-GLYCEMIC FRUITS (APPLE, ORANGE, PEAR, STRAWBERRIES)
4. GLUTEN-FREE GRAINS (WHOLE OATS, BROWN RICE)
5. GRAINS WITH GLUTEN, IF NOT INTOLERANT (THIS MAY SURPRISE YOU!)
6. 1 TEASPOON OF ORGANIC HONEY WITH COFFEE OR TEA (EXCLUDING AGAVE, OR ANY OTHER KIND OF SUGARY SUBSTANCE)

Keep a brief journal or notepad of what you ate and notes of how you feel that day. If you start seeing old ailments and symptoms come up again, you know that the type of food or the quantity isn't something you can tolerate. If you can't pinpoint which food is ailing you, step back and take longer-run, more isolated tests of certain foods (i.e. if you can't really tell if it was the beans or the blueberries that made you feel fatigued, then only eat beans for the mid-day meal two days in a row to see if that continues – if not, try only adding the blueberries for a couple of days to see if that's the culprit). And, unless you're absolutely in love with any certain food, you only need to test as much as you desire. None of these foods are required in your everyday diet.

Since insulin production is partly influenced by your previous meal, don't add carbohydrates in back-to-back meals or snacks. During this period, look for any symptoms you had noted pre-challenge that were eliminated by the test, and especially look for symptoms that develop immediately after eating, such as intestinal bloating, sleepiness or feelings of depression.

If any signs or symptoms that disappeared during or following the Two-Week Test have now returned, you've probably exceeded your carbohydrate limit. For example:

- You're getting cravings again.
- You are gaining weight again.
- Your blood pressure rises significantly after it was reduced.

If any of these situations occur, reduce the carbohydrates by half or even completely. You can also continue experimenting to see which particular foods cause symptoms and which don't. Many people return to the Two-Week Carb Challenge and begin the process again. After all, it's only two weeks to Reset and feel great again!

## A note on bread

Most bread, crackers, cereals and other grains are processed and should be completely avoided. Even those labeled “whole grain” or “100 percent whole wheat” are typically processed in some fashion. Read ingredient lists carefully. Use real-food whole grain products, if you can find them. These include sprouted breads, whole oats (which take 30 to 45 minutes to cook), and other dense products made with just ground wheat, rye, or other grains. If in doubt, avoid them.

Some people can tolerate simple carbohydrates, such as fresh fruits, plain yogurt and honey, but not complex carbohydrates such as sweet potato, whole grains, beans or other starches. During the post-test period, it’s easy to determine whether you can or can’t tolerate any wheat products due to a sensitivity, allergy or other response to gluten. I was very surprised to see this happen in my own body!

**\*\*Awesome Tip\*\*** Occasionally, you may feel the need to go through the Two-Week Carb Challenge again to check yourself, or to quickly get back on track after careless eating such as during the holidays, vacations or periods of stress.

Many people find the loss of grains in the diet leaves the digestive tract sluggish and a little constipated. After years of eating lots of carbohydrates, your intestine gets used to that type of bulk. If you become constipated during the Challenge, or afterwards when a lower amount of carbohydrate in the diet is maintained, it could be due to several reasons:

- **Lack of Fiber.** If you require a fiber supplement, be sure to use the ones that do not contain sugar, so read the labels. Psyllium is a high-fiber herb that is an effective promoter of intestinal function. I personally use Psyllium Husk caplets in my supplement regime. Alternatively, adding plain unsweetened psyllium to a glass of water, tomato juice, or healthy smoothie can keep your system running smoothly. Add one teaspoon a day for a few days to make sure it’s tolerated, then move towards one tablespoon a day.
- **Dehydration – Important!** If you don’t drink enough water, you could be predisposed to constipation. During the Two-Week Carb Challenge, you’ll need *more* water — up to 100 oz. or more per day — which is a normal amount for a person of average weight.
- **Other Nutrients.** Adequate intake of natural fats can also be helpful in preventing constipation. Vegetables, legumes such as lentils, and fruits are also great sources of fiber. So, if you become constipated, it may simply be that you need to eat more vegetables and maybe some fruits.

Occasionally, some people get tired during or after the Two-Week Carb Challenge. Usually, it’s from not eating enough food, or not eating often enough. A common problem is not eating breakfast. Many people shouldn’t go more than 3-4 hours without eating something healthy. Remember: You’re NOT on a DIET! Pick any of the foods on the YES list and eat your heart out!

## **Maintaining Your Food Balance**

Once you successfully finish the Two-Week Carb Challenge and add back the right amount of tolerable carbohydrate foods you like, you should have a good idea of your carbohydrate limits.

Now, you're on your way to balancing your whole diet. During this process, take the time to learn which of the choices available in supermarkets, farmer's markets, and elsewhere are truly healthy, and which should be avoided. While there's nothing radical about the notion that refined carbohydrates are unhealthy, many radical diet plans make it seem like all carbohydrates are deadly. They're not. It's a lot more important to find your level of tolerance. Once you know it, eat only healthy carbohydrates — lentils, fresh fruit, unrefined grains (if tolerated), and organic honey as a sweetener. Now you're really on your way to living a healthier, ailment and symptom-free life!

Remember: “It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society!”

Once you've completed The Two-Week Carb Challenge, write to me at [ryan@thecarbsituation.com](mailto:ryan@thecarbsituation.com) and let me know what you thought and how you're feeling! I love to hear how different people responded to the challenge! Or, you can chime in at my website at: <http://www.tcs.wtf>.

Good Luck, and Go Kick Some Carb Ass!!

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*\*Much of The Two-Week Carb Challenge was inspired and adapted from Phil Maffetone's 2 Week Test, which can be found at: <https://philmaffetone.com/2-week-test/>*