

## Low Carb Diet

Low-carb diets are effective. They are virtually guaranteed to help you get lean and shredded; however, they can backfire if you don't understand the right way to apply the low-carb format to training, protein intake and the other variables that will determine your success or failure in building a top-rate physique.

Follow this 12-week program and its 12 strategies for sure-fire low-carb dieting. Employ the tactics laid out and you'll get ripped and ready in less time than you thought possible.

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### Strategy 1: Reduce carbs by 50%

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Cut your current carb intake in half to stimulate fat burning. A 180-pound bodybuilder generally consumes 2-3 grams (g) of carbs per pound of bodyweight (360-540 g) per day - enough to promote muscle growth without the risk of getting fat. If you are eating 500 g of carbs per day, slash that daily total to 250 g. This easy-to-follow formula will allow you to lose one or two pounds per week.

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### Strategy 2: Reduce portion size

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If you are fuzzy about how many grams of carbs you are currently chowing down daily, take the path of least resistance and simply cut your portions of carbs in half. Eat half of a yam instead of a whole one; eat an appetizer-size portion of pasta instead of a plateful; and so on.

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### Strategy 3: Bump up protein

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It's fundamental that as you lower your carbohydrate intake, your protein intake has to go up. Let's assume that you are currently consuming 1 g of protein per pound of bodyweight - the benchmark for packing on lean muscle mass. Once you start slashing carbs, increase protein intake by 40-50 g per day. A 180-pound bodybuilder would increase daily protein consumption from 180 g to 220-230 g per day.

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### Strategy 4: Don't overdo protein

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Low-carb diets reduce reserves of muscle glycogen (used to support the energy requirements of hardcore training) and accelerate the burning of fat and protein. The goal in strategy 3 is to increase protein consumption so that muscle tissue isn't burned as fuel for training. Stick to the guidelines of a 40-50 g increase.

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### Strategy 5: Ditch the cardio

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Cardiovascular exercise can be an effective method of depleting fat stores. For most people on a low-calorie low-carb diet, though, cardio is a no-no. Preserve hard-earned muscle by using your energy in the weight room; the fat will be expended in support of the recovery process the rest of the day.

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### Strategy 6: Manipulate metabolism

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Most bodybuilders will lean out by following the first five strategies, but even low-carb diets present the age-old problem of adaptation through repetition. As the body gets accustomed to significant reductions in caloric intake, metabolism tends to slow down, and that spells trouble for fat burning. To avoid this metabolic slowdown, reduce carbs to a daily total of 50-100 g beginning with the seventh week of your shredding cycle. Bodybuilders weighing 180 pounds or less should consume 50-70 g of carbs daily for the next six weeks; bodybuilders weighing more than 180 pounds should consume 70-100 g of carbs daily for the next six weeks.

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### Strategy 7: Power up protein

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As carbs dip to lower levels (in strategy 6), increase protein to 2 g per pound of bodyweight per day. The added protein will ensure that you maintain muscle while continuing to lose fat.

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**Strategy 8: Carb up after training**

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Eat most of your carbs right after working out to elevate insulin levels and to offset the muscle-wasting effects of the cortisol spike caused by low-carb diets. Get the bulk of your 50-100 g of carbs from a potpourri of complex carbs (such as potatoes, rice and yams) and simple carbs (such as honey, jam, sugar and cold breakfast cereals).

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**Strategy 9: Cheat with veggies**

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A great way to offset the cravings and feelings of deprivation caused by low-carb diets is to opt for high-fiber low-carb vegetables. Mushrooms, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and lettuce are good snack foods, and they add highly desirable phytonutrients and fiber to your diet.

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**Strategy 10: Just say yes to salt**

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When carbs are restricted to less than 100 g a day, the body responds by lowering its output of aldosterone, a potent hormone that aids the retention of sodium and water. Since water retention is therefore unlikely on a low-carb diet, feel free to add flavor to your food with salt, soy sauce, mustard and other condiments that contain salt.

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**Strategy 11: Supplement with BCAAs and glutamine**

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Branched-chain amino acids (BCAAs) are burned as fuel when glycogen stores are low. Supplement with 6-8 g of BCAAs to offset catabolism (muscle wasting). Supplementing with glutamine helps to curtail the catabolic effects of the higher cortisol levels that go hand in hand with a low-carb diet. Bodybuilders under 180 pounds should take at least 6 g per day, split evenly before and after training; bodybuilders weighing more than 180 pounds should take a minimum of 9 g per day, split evenly before and after training.

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**Strategy 12: Give it a rest**

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Another way to prevent a metabolic slowdown is to take a complete break from the low-carb approach for one day every 7-10 days after the seventh week of the 12-week shredding cycle. On that blessed day, increase carbs to 2 or 2-1/2 g per pound of bodyweight and decrease protein to 1 g per pound of bodyweight. Go ahead, enjoy a stack of pancakes with Vermont maple syrup. The next day, it's back to the low-carb levels of strategy 6 again and back en route to a lean and mean machine by summer.