

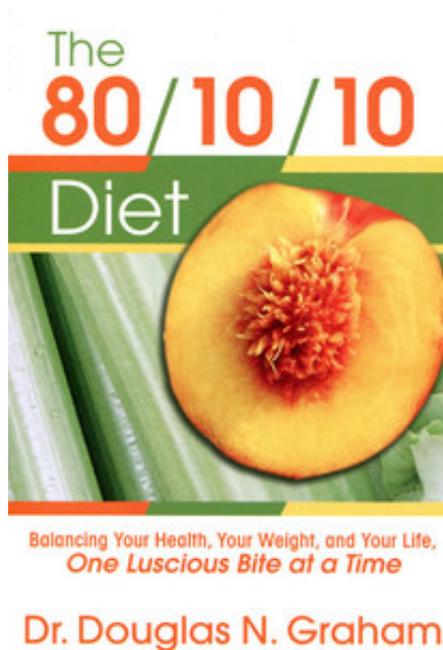
Douglas N. Graham

The 80/10/10 Diet

Reading excerpt

[The 80/10/10 Diet](#)
of [Douglas N. Graham](#)

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Narayana Verlag GmbH, Blumenplatz 2, D-79400 Kandern, Germany

Tel. +49 7626 9749 700

Email info@narayana-verlag.com

<http://www.narayana-verlag.com>



Chapter 5

Carbohydrate: 80% Minimum

Nutritionists and health-minded diet professionals generally agree that 60 to 80% of our calories need to come from carbohydrates. Having established so far in this book that the percentage of total calories in our diet to be provided by both fat and protein should run in the single digits (not more than 10% each), we can see that the high end of this range is just about right. For most people, I recommend 80% carbohydrates, or even higher. In fact, if we consume much less than 80% of our calories as carbohydrates, we are destined to consume too much protein, fat, or both—but more likely it will be fat.

Insufficient carbohydrate in the diet leads to an array of health concerns, primary among which are eating disorders, severe food cravings, lethargy, weakness, and all of the conditions associated with the overconsumption of fats. As we increase protein intake above ten percent of daily calories from protein, we start seeing low energy and increased acid toxemia, a precursor for osteoporosis, kidney disease, arthritis, immune dysfunction, and cancer. Eating substantially more than ten percent of daily calories from fat can lead to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer, and many other maladies. Any way you slice it—too few carbohydrates, too much fat, or too much protein—you will suffer serious health consequences.

Sugar: The Fuel We Are Designed For

Before our cells can utilize any food for fuel, whether it contains primarily carbohydrate, protein, or fat, it must first be converted into simple sugars. Carbohydrates are by far the easiest to convert to useful sugars. Glucose (a simple sugar) is the primary, preferred source of fuel for every tissue and cell of our bodies. In fact, some of our cells (the brain, red blood cells, and some nervous tissue, for example) depend almost exclusively on glucose as their fuel source.

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Fuel vs. Energy

A major misconception people have about food is that it is a source of energy. This fallacy is partly supported by the fact that in the nutritional sciences, the words "fuel" and "energy" are used synonymously. The lethargy that follows a holiday meal easily demonstrates the fault in this line of thinking.

In health sciences however, the term "energy" is defined as a low-voltage electrical current produced by your brain during sleep, which runs through your body via your nervous system (also known as vital nerve energy). When you are awake, you use nerve energy more rapidly than the brain can produce it. Hence, you eventually run out of energy. After an appropriate period of hours procuring sleep, you awaken, fully recharged and full of nerve energy again.

On the other hand, food is referred to as "fuel." We need to consume fuel for three primary reasons— nutrition, hydration, and pleasure. Through the process of digestion, we "burn" our fuel (food) to release its own energy potential and utilize it for ourselves. During this complicated process, we receive a net gain in energy by using our own nerve energy to release the potential in food.

To help explain the difference, we can apply the analogy of a car. We have no difficulty understanding that the fuel in our gas tank (food) is completely different than the energy supplied from the battery of our car (vital nerve energy). Either without the other is completely useless, but in combination they work to create motion and activity.

Humans have little or no capacity for storing excess protein or excess carbohydrate, but we can convert both to fat stores for later use as fuel. When we do not eat sufficient carbohydrates to meet our fuel needs, our bodies break down stored fats into glucose through a complex chemical process called gluconeogenesis (literally, "the creation of new sugar"). While this can be a lifesaving process in times of hardship, in the absence of sufficient carbohydrates, gluconeogenesis results in the production of by-products known as ketones.

Circulating in the bloodstream, ketones adversely affect our decision-making abilities, because they exert an influence upon brain chemistry similar to that of alcohol. Effectively, a heavy ketotic state renders us "under the influence." In such a state, we should not make decisions important to

our life and health, such as those made when driving a car, doing sports, or performing any work that requires precision of body or mind.

Types of Carbohydrates

The definitions of carbohydrate and its constituents are evolving. Among lay people, carbohydrates are thought to fall into two broad categories, complex and simple. Science recognizes intricate differences between the various carbohydrate compounds, and considerable confusion exists in the literature that describes them. Here is a simplified summary of terms, which is by no means definitive; you will find many variations on this list:

Simple sugars (mainly monosaccharides consisting of one sugar molecule and disaccharides made of two monosaccharides). Primary among these are glucose, fructose, galactose, and dextrose (monosaccharides), as well as lactose, maltose and sucrose. They are found in most foods, including fruits, vegetables, milk, and honey.

Oligosaccharides (short-chain sugars consisting of three to nine sugar molecules): Oligosaccharides include raffinose, stachyose, verbascose, fructo-oligosaccharides, and maltodextrins. Most renowned for causing the flatulence associated with beans, some oligosaccharides are entirely indigestible, while others are partially digestible.

Polysaccharides ("complex carbohydrates" that contain 10 or more—as many as several thousand—sugar molecules): These include starches (amylose and amylopectin) and dextrins found in grains, rice, and legumes, as well as nonstarch polysaccharides, also known as fiber (cellulose, pectin, gums, beta-glucans, and fructans), found in grains, fruits, and vegetables.

Together, monosaccharides and disaccharides comprise the "sugars" found on the Nutrition Facts portion of food labels. Monosaccharides are the only carbohydrates that can be absorbed directly into the bloodstream, through the intestinal lining. Our digestive system easily breaks down disaccharides into their monosaccharide constituents.

Simple carbohydrates come in two forms: refined sugars (extracted from fruits, grains, tubers, and sugar cane) and whole-food sugars (the sugars

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First, when most people talk about eating fruits and vegetables, they tend to think of the vegetables being predominant. Yet nutritionists are very familiar with the studies that have concluded that a diet predominated by vegetables simply cannot supply sufficient caloric density to support human health. On a diet of just vegetables, I agree, it is highly unlikely that any human beings could maintain their health. They would lose weight at a steady rate that would eventually become unsustainable, and they would suffer unyielding health decline.

Second, in all likelihood, they simply don't conceive of consuming fruit in sufficient quantity to meet our caloric needs, even though doing so is quite pleasant and not difficult. They dismiss this possibility wholesale, as it is entirely outside of their framework of reference. After all, who knows anyone who lives primarily (but *not* entirely) on fruit? I must admit that in today's world, it is a rare individual who lives this way. Yet almost every person I have ever met who eats great quantities of fruit has written a book extolling its virtues. There must be a reason these fruit eaters are so excited about the excellent health benefits that result from such a foodstyle.

Finally, their misguided notions about the glycemic index and their unnecessary worries about elevated triglyceride levels literally prevent them from considering fruit as a primary source of calories. And so, in spite of the fact that fruit is universally promoted as the ultimate health food, and in spite of their own conclusions that carbohydrates must predominate the diet in order for health to be possible, the majority of the world's health professionals fail to see the obvious: A fruit-based diet is the finest possibility we have for developing optimum health.

No one can deny that the low-fat vegetarian diets recommended by Pritikin, McDougall, and their colleagues produce phenomenal results in terms of health, vitality, and body weight. When they substitute cooked starches for meat in their diets, program adherents show a marked reduction in cardiovascular disease and an initial improvement in overall health and well-being.

Yet starch-and-grain-based diet proponents still broadly miss the mark where optimum nutrition and health are concerned. These complex

carbohydrate foods lack in areas such as vitamin C, soluble fiber, and several hundred thousand phytonutrients. The experience of eating them can't compare to the ease, simplicity, cleanliness, and natural satiation of eating sweet fruit.

Grains: Pritikin's Downfall

*In 1988, a gentleman named Ross Home wrote a book entitled *Improving on Pritikin—You Can Do Better*.³² His story is fascinating. In the 1970s, Home was the "best disciple and staunchest supporter" of Nathan Pritikin and his renowned grain-based diet. But after experiencing himself and observing in others some serious deleterious effects of the Pritikin plan (including arthritis and cancer), Home wrote this book. In more than 150 pages, Home details the health perils that accompany a grain-based diet and precisely where Pritikin's logic fails. With utmost respect for the superb results of Pritikin's low-fat plan in reversing heart disease, Home points out the following:*

Although Pritikin's low-fat regimen is nothing short of miraculous in terms of reversing heart disease, a healthy heart does not ensure a healthy person. Pritikin's emphasis on grain (and, interestingly, its excess protein, which averages "only" 12% of calories) creates other health issues, ranging from arthritis to cancer.

*Homes book presents a compelling and spellbinding argument against the consumption of grains. Here is an excerpt from Chapter 10, "Grains Are for the Birds"**

Pritikin's mission, first and foremost, was the reversal of coronary heart disease. This was uppermost in his mind and so his reasoning followed:

- We must lower fat, cholesterol and protein, the causes of atherosclerosis and heart disease. To do this we must cut out foods of animal origin. We must become vegetarian.
- As most of the food we eat goes into the production of energy, if we cut out animal foods which provide most of the energy in the American diet, as well as the protein, where then will we get our energy and sufficient protein?
- The only other suitable foods available are cereals, root vegetables, and fruits, because green vegetables are so low in food value that you

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would have to eat them constantly all day long like cattle do to get enough. We must therefore choose between starch foods (cereals and potatoes) and fruit, and consider green vegetables mainly as a source of vitamins and minerals.

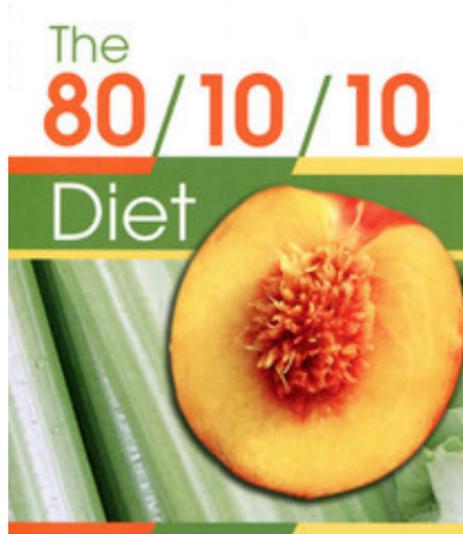
So far Pritikin's reasoning was correct, but at this point his preoccupation with eliminating atherosclerosis became an impediment. He knew that cholesterol and triglycerides (blood fats) were the two factors most implicated in atherosclerosis and he was determined that his diet should diminish these in the blood to as low levels as possible. Cutting out animal derived foods completely eliminated cholesterol and the harmful animal fats from the diet, but what about triglycerides from vegetable sources? Pritikin knew that concentrated sugar of any kind—refined sugar or even extracted natural raw sugar—entered the bloodstream too quickly, upsetting the normal blood sugar levels and resulting in the production of triglycerides, his number-two enemy. His reasoning logically continued:

- If out of our two remaining sources of energy and protein, one of them contains sugar, a substance which elevates triglycerides, we cannot entertain it as a principal source of nourishment.
- We must therefore severely ration fruit because of its sugar content and rely almost entirely on cereals to provide our energy and protein.

What was the outcome of this reasoning? It was a great outcome; Pritikin first of all eliminated his own atherosclerosis and then proceeded to eliminate the atherosclerosis in the bodies of thousands of people who followed his teachings.

This is how the current rage on complex carbohydrate started and why companies who make whole-grain bread, pasta, cookies and crackers are doing so well.

But the reversal of heart disease and its associated problems is not the be-all and end-all of health and longevity. There are other things to consider besides restoring good circulation. Unsticking the blood is only the first step in optimizing health, the second step is to get the blood's chemistry right. Pritikin had taken the lipo from lipotoxemia but much toxemia still remained. *When he grouped the natural sugars contained in fruit in with other sugars, Pritikin had made a fatal mistake.*



Balancing Your Health, Your Weight, and Your Life,
One Luscious Bite at a Time

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