

BEWARE OF HIGH-PROTEIN DIETS

Don't go by their popularity, as these diets have undesirable effects in the long run

Lisa Antao

The Atkins Diet, is perhaps the most popular high-protein diet since it came into the limelight in the 90s with Hollywood celebrities like Jennifer Aniston, Catherine Zeta-Jones and many more, as its followers. In 2013, the diet bounced back in popularity thanks to Kim Kardashian (who allegedly lost an estimated 25 pounds post-delivery following the diet) and Sharon Osbourne. But whether you're following The Atkins Diet or The Dukan Diet or The Protein Power Diet, taking cue from your favourite celebrity/celebrities, it's time you think before blindly aping them, as these high-protein diets do have their share of

health risks in the long run.

Case in point

Pritesh Kumar (name changed), 35, a banker by profession and marathon runner suffered from irritable bowel symptoms. He was advised to maintain a dairy and record his weekly diet. It was found that being a bachelor he had no proper meals and was on a high protein diet since he was training for the marathon. His meals consisted of egg whites, chicken, cheese, milk and artificial sugar. Lack of fibre and carbohydrates made him constipated, bloated and irritable at work, recounts consultant dietician Zainab Syed, AVIVA Hospitals. Later, Pritesh was advised to control his protein intake and was advised to include more fruits and steamed vegetables in his diet. Also, he was advised to drink plenty of water, avoiding tea, coffee, fruit juices and artificial sweeteners.

High-protein diets are quite popular

Proteins are the building blocks of the body. Also, they do play important role in catalysing various physiological reactions. They play a vital role in maintaining the immunity of the body. Then how does one know, how much is too much? **Physician, endocrinologist, diabetologist and bariatrician Dr Deepak Chaturvedi, AMAAYA Antiaging & Wellness Clinic says,** "The daily requirement of dietary proteins is 0.75 to 1 gm per kilogram of ideal lean body weight. The requirement increases in the state of pregnancy, lactation, recovery from illness and during the growth phase. However, in last few years, high-protein diets have become very prevalent in the weight loss industry. Many dieticians, gym instructors and weight loss doctors are promoting exclusively high-protein diet to an extent of more than 2-3 grams of proteins per kg body weight. This amount of concentrated proteins intake may bring following adverse effects on the body."

Gives rise to nutritional deficiencies

Syed definitely agrees that most high-protein diets give rise to various nutritional deficiency, saying "They restrict consumption of carbohydrates, which may cause insufficient fibre leading to constipa-

tion, increases your risk of vitamin B and E deficiency, as well as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and in the long run, colon cancer. Cutting off fruits and vegetables means cutting off vitamins and minerals. Besides such diets advise one to eat more of meat, chicken and eggs which could lead to elevated cholesterol levels; which in turn could also lead to damage to internal organs."

Can lead to hyperacidity, renal problems and hormonal imbalance

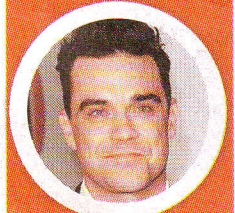
Dr Chaturvedi lists the following adverse effects of a high-protein diet:

- Proteins need acidic environment in the stomach for digestion. Very high protein intake leads to hyperacidity and complications of the same, also leading to indigestion and flatulence.
- Very high protein intake may lead to increased protein filtration load on the kidneys. On chronic overexposure, this may lead to kidney failure. Therefore, a high-protein intake is not recommended for individuals with kidney failure and liver dysfunction.
- Exclusively high protein diet with restricted carbohydrates and fats lead to decreased thyroid hormone secretion in the body, leading to hypothyroidism.
- Exclusively high protein diet with restricted carbohydrate and fats lead to decreased synthesis of steroid hormones, including estrogen, progesterone and testosterone. This decreased synthesis may bring menstrual irregularities in women, and decreased libido and sexual dysfunction in men.

Can lead to osteoporosis in women

Some health studies say that a high-protein diet can also lead to reduce bone density leading to osteoporosis. But should you believe these studies? "There is enough scientific evidence to prove that a high-protein diet causes low bone density resulting in osteoporosis. One main reason would be consumption of only meat and poultry products. The second important reason is that a high-protein diet requires your body to process more calcium. So even if you eat a lot of cheese and yoghurt, your body might still extract calcium from your bones resulting in decrease bone density leading to osteoporosis," explains Syed.

Hollywood celebs who have tried The Atkins Diet



Kim Kardashian, Sharon Osbourne, Robbie Williams, Jennifer Aniston and Renee Zellweger

