

How to Cheat on Low Carb

Turn your next indulgence into something useful. Shake up your eating style, keep your metabolism guessing and your scale moving in the right direction.

Inside Your Guide

Planning a cheat day doesn't need to end in disaster. Plan it right and you'll benefit in ways you've never imagined. Is this set-up guilt free cheating? Or a lavish stall-buster? You decide.

- When and why low carbers cheat
- How to cheat *and* burn fat
- Before, during and after your cheat day
- Advice and warnings

What's a Cheat Day?

Atkins stalls are frustrating. Diets don't always cooperate. If you're limiting carbs but the scale won't budge, try a low carb cheat day. Cheat days are a simple way to bust a plateau, jump-start your metabolism and enjoy forbidden foods. But if you fail to plan, plan to fail.

Boost fat burning and weight loss by in a *sensible* way. If you're on a low carb or keto diet, here's a simple plan to succeed. Be realistic – please don't go crazy.

- Save your calories for what matters *most*.
- Stay honest and track all the extra carbs.



When Low Carbers Cheat

If you've *just started* Atkins or another low carb diet, a cheat day is NOT recommended during the first several weeks - minimum. Give yourself time to adjust to your new way of eating. Wait a few weeks, see if your progress slows, *then* revisit the idea of cheating on low carb.

If you're in the Atkins Induction phase (first two weeks of low carb with other food restrictions), cheat days sabotage your initial weight loss and efforts.

Why Low Carbers Cheat

We eventually adapt to exercise and diet routines. Over time, our progress may stall and then we reach a weight plateau. If you're not seeing progress, it's time to shake up your metabolism by varying your net carbs for a day.

Sometimes, all we need is a little nudge to get the scale moving again. Of course, exercise, fasting and reducing calories also shake up the metabolism.

How Low Carbers Cheat

Schedule six days on low carb, then have one moderate-carb cheat day.

The cheat day lets you eat extra carbs, but these are *slow carbs*, such as sweet potatoes, legumes, seeds, fruit and nuts. Again, these cheat foods are only allowed *after* the Atkins Induction phase.

Cheat to Burn Fat

Cheat days trigger rapid fat loss due to their effect on leptin levels.

Leptin controls metabolism, hunger and cravings. Once we adapt to routine, leptin levels drop, our weight loss slows down and we store more fat.

Cheat days outsmart sluggish bodies. Eating more carbs one day per week *raises* leptin levels, keeping your body primed for rapid fat loss the rest of the week.

Before Your Cheat Day

Determine your cheat day calories. First, find out exactly how many calories your body needs. Use this simple [online calorie calculator](#) to find your baseline.

Jump-start weight loss with a 20% – 40% total calorie increase on your cheat day. If you've limited net carbs for several weeks, eating 50-60 total net grams on your cheat day will feel like *much more*. And technically speaking, 60 net carbs per day is *still* low carb.

During Your Cheat Day

Eat Only What You Love

Make your day delicious without going overboard. *Don't* dive into a dozen Twinkie cakes. *Do* splurge on something healthier and savory, like creamy Atkins cheesecake or a dark chocolate keto mousse.

Enjoy Foods with All Your Senses

On your cheat day, create a satisfying and *mindful* meal experience.

- Serve your meals with a garnish on a beautiful plates.
- Appreciate the eye appeal of new or forbidden foods.
- Eat slowly.
- Take smaller bites and give yourself time to fully enjoy the flavor.

Eat Slow Carbs

Slow carbs take longer to absorb and digest. Slow carbs keep you fuller longer and don't cause abrupt insulin spikes.

Slow-release carbs are healthier options because they keep your blood sugar levels more stable between meals, and help you feel more satiated so that you don't overdo it on your cheat.

Veggies

All non-starchy vegetables contain slow-release carbs. Solid options are spinach, kale, tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, cucumber, onions, asparagus, mushrooms, leafy greens and sweet bell peppers.

Fresh Fruits

Most low carb fruits qualify: berries, melons, cherries, apples, plums and pears. Avoid tropical fruits, such as papaya, mango and pineapple.

Sweet Potatoes

Sweet potatoes are higher in net carbs, but are still considered a source of slow-release carbs.

Nuts and Nut Butter

Nuts and nut butters are high in fiber and protein, a source of healthy fat and digested at a slower pace. Use walnuts, almonds, macadamia nuts or pecans.

Choose Filling Foods

Eat foods that go the distance. Low carb foods with more protein and fiber keep you full and suppress the appetite.

- Try fresh, high fiber low carb fruit (like raspberries) with heavy cream.
- Bake sweet potatoes with onions and grass-fed butter.

Make Better Fast Carb Choices

Avoid or limit sugary and processed carbs like cake, bread, candy and cookies. If you're determined to eat fast carbs, try to make *smarter* fast carb choices.

Good alternatives are low carb and keto desserts with artificial sweeteners.



- Choose cheesecake - not cinnamon rolls.
- Choose dark chocolate – not candy.
- Choose sugar free jello with extra whipped cream – not chocolate cake.

After Your Cheat Day

Jump right back into your low carb plan! Cheating affects the rest of your week. This can go either way, so play it smart and cheat for weight loss, not gluttony.

After you cheat, you'll continue to see benefits/effects for the next 5-6 days.

If you cheated for weight loss, you'll burn fat more efficiently all week long – assuming you stay on your regular low carb plan for the rest of that week.

Cheat Day Warnings

Water Weight

Cheat days mean eating more carbs. And excess carbs cause water retention.

Fortunately, the extra water weight disappears in a day or two. To speed things along, burn off extra carbs with exercise, practice intermittent fasting or eat close to zero carb for a few days.

The Backslide

No one is perfect 100% of the time. We strive for progress. Every low carber slips up, and that's OK. Don't let a slip or cheat day turn into a long-term backslide.

If you backslide, go right back to your low carb way of eating. *Don't give up!* You've worked hard to stick to your diet so don't wreck your efforts over one cheat day.

Cheat Day Pros

- Cheat days give you a chance to enjoy old favorite foods.
- Low carb is an on-going lifestyle. There are times you'll have to eat off-plan. Cheat days are perfect for social functions, restaurants and celebrations.
- Cheat days help you say "No" the rest of the week.
- Easy to lose any cheat weight by exercising or reducing carbs a few days.

Cheat Day Cons

- Many low carbers report feeling bad *physically*, being depressed, feeling bloated, tired or irritable. Joint aches may return temporarily due to inflammation from excess carbs.
- Eating too many carbs stops ketosis and those benefits for a few days.
- Cheating on Atkins temporarily undoes some of the progress you've made.
- Eating extra carbs leads to cravings – and possibly backslides or binges.



Cheat Day Advice

Many low carbers report taking a break from low carb eating works well for special or social occasions. They also say that one-day break helps them stick to low carb long-term. Other low carbers complain cheat days set up future disasters.

If you're worried about cheating on low carb or still deciding when to plan your cheat day, consider these tips:

- Wait at least 4-6 weeks after starting low carb. Cheat early in the day with one meal. Plan the meal and extra carbs ahead of time.
- Prepare a day-after plan that includes exercise and lower carbs. Use your calculated baseline for your total calories and eat very low carb foods.
- Spend the other six days sticking to your regular low carb plan. On the last day of that week, measure or weigh to track your progress.

Notice how you feel about your cheat meal the day after. If it was an easy, positive experience, try an entire day. If you're having cravings or experience tiredness or irritability, hold off a few weeks or months and re-visit the idea when you're in a different low carb space.

