

Atkins OWL Phase

The second phase of the Atkins diet is called Ongoing Weight Loss or OWL. After the rapid weight loss of the 2-week Induction phase, you'll be slowing your weight loss down just a bit. You'll add in specific carbohydrates that will make your diet a little easier and your weight loss just a bit slower. However, you will continue to lose weight at a steady even pace with ease.

During the OWL phase you will boost your body's ability to burn fats. Although you'll be adding carbohydrates slowly, you'll still remain in the state of ketosis. You will continue to use your excess fat as fuel for your body, and the pounds and inches will continue to come off.

The OWL phase will also teach you to make better carbohydrate choices. The recipes and guidelines for OWL will increase your knowledge about nutritious food. You'll replace the poor carbohydrate choices that you relied on in the past with new and better choices.

You'll also learn how many carbohydrates you can consume and still lose weight. The process of the OWL phase is an experiment in what your specific body does with carbs. During the OWL phase, you'll gradually increase your daily carb intake from the 20-gram level that you used in induction. Each week you'll try adding another 5 grams of carbs and then take note of what happens. When weight loss slows too much, you'll know that you've exceeded your personal carb limit.

OWL also prepares you for your permanent weight management program (called maintenance). The habits and practices that you develop during OWL will go a long way toward your long-term success. Treat this period of your diet as training for the real "test" - your post diet life.

During the OWL phase, you'll still be getting most of your carbohydrates from vegetables (just as you do during Induction). It's important to continue to eat a wide variety of vegetables, as they are good for your overall health and good for maintaining intestinal health during the Atkins diet. You will be able to add more portions of vegetables, and then gradually be able to add nuts, seeds and even berries. However, the main focus of the diet will still be protein.

In a way, the Induction phase is easier than any of the other phases of Atkins. The strict plan always works and always produces weight loss. As you enter the OWL phases, you'll need to be more mindful of your carbohydrate count and keep better track of your weight. You'll have more choice and that may lead to more temptations, which could result in a stalling of your weight loss or even weight gain.

Counting carbohydrate grams is critical in your OWL success. If you don't count, you will end up consuming more carbohydrates than you should. However, there are many tools available that can help you with counting. There are several handy, portable books that will tell you the number of grams of carbohydrates in certain foods. Over time, you'll know the "carb count" for your favorite foods instantly.

Counting carbs is also essential during the OWL phase because you are playing detective. You are investigating to find your personal carb count, the amount of carbohydrate grams that you can eat daily and still lose weight. During the first week of OWL, you'll move from 20 carbohydrate grams to 25. It is recommended that you add this in the form of more vegetables, like asparagus or cauliflower. You'll continue at the 25-gram level for a week, and then move up to 30 grams a day.

As you increase your carbohydrate gram level, watch your weight closely. If you experience too much of a slowdown, you know you've gone too high. You'll find your maximum carbohydrate gram level when you stop losing weight at all. When this happens, you'll know you've reached your limit. Once you discover your personal carb count, drop down below that number if you want to continue losing weight.

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