

## Atkins Pre Maintenance Phase

After experiencing the Induction and OWL phases of the Atkins diet, your next step is to enter the pre-maintenance phase. This phase will set you up for a lifetime of healthy and balanced eating and living. You should begin this phase as you come within 5 to 10 pounds of your target weight goal. Your weight loss will be slowed down even further but it is for a purpose. You want to learn the practices and habits that will determine your long-term success.

In the OWL phase, you will be adding carbohydrate grams to your daily count in the increment of 5 grams per week. During pre-maintenance you will increase that to 10 grams per week. As long as you are continuing to shed weight (no matter how slowly it is coming off) you will continue to add grams. Ideally, toward the end of the pre-maintenance phase you will be losing less than one pound per week.

According to the Atkins book, you should continue this phase until you get to your goal weight and can maintain it for a month. This process may take anywhere from 1 to 3 months. Your goal is to reach a state called "carbohydrate equilibrium." This is your ideal carbohydrate intake and it will cause you to maintain your weight perfectly.

During pre-maintenance you'll get to try a wider variety of foods. Make sure to introduce new foods slowly and increase your carbohydrate intake at a measured pace. Don't add 20 or 30 carb grams a week. Measuring out the increases in increments of 10 will give you a better idea of your personal carbohydrate count. Knowing this number will help set you up for long term weight management.

Make sure to check with a carbohydrate counter resource book or a trusted website before you add a new food to your diet. Some examples of 10 carbohydrate gram foods include 1/3 of a cup of legumes, 1/2 an apple, 1/4 cup of potatoes and 1/2 cup of plain oatmeal. These foods can be included on a daily basis, and then increased the next week.

Pre-maintenance is not a perfect process. It takes a delicate balance of carbohydrate counting and exercise to slow weight loss yet still move it forward. You'll need to pay even closer attention than you have before to make sure that your carb gram increase is not resulting in an increase in weight. There is a fine line between gaining, maintaining and losing, and during pre-maintenance you are trying to find out just exactly where that line is.

If you aren't able to add carbohydrates without stalling your weight loss, you may have a high metabolic resistance. You will benefit from increasing your

exercise regimen to get your metabolism burning at a higher level. For you, the pre-maintenance phase will resemble OWL more closely.

Some people do a variation on pre-maintenance that allows them to have a treat once a week. Instead of adding 10 grams per day, they allow themselves a 20 to 30-carbohydrate gram treat a few times a week. Examples of the treat could be a piece of a fruit or a serving of sweet potatoes. A glass of white wine or beer also qualifies for this treat. This is a fun way to reward yourself and still be on the plan.

Yet another way to do pre-maintenance is to average out your carbohydrate intake for the week. Since life is sometimes unpredictable, it can be helpful to have a bit of flexibility in your eating plan. For example, if your current carbohydrate level is at 70 grams, you can limit yourself to 50 grams one day. Then the next day, you can splurge a bit on a meal and have 90 grams for that day. However, only follow this method if it doesn't create carbohydrate cravings. Sometimes excess carb grams on one day can make you crave them even more the next day.

The pre-maintenance phase will give you the tools for long-term success. By learning to slowly increase your carbohydrate grams, you'll have a better hold on the amount of carbohydrates that is right for you.

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