

Atkins Maintenance

The final phase of the Atkins diet plan is lifetime maintenance. This is the time to continue your new eating plan at a maintenance level and keep yourself at your goal weight. The habits you have created will now become a permanent way of life. During the third phase, pre-maintenance, you learned exactly how many carbohydrate grams your body can tolerate and still maintain your ideal weight. In this phase, you'll put this approach into practice and learn to live with your ideal carb count on a daily basis.

During lifetime maintenance you will continue to expand your food selections and eat more carbohydrate grams than you did previously. Depending on your specific metabolic needs, you can eat some of the foods that you enjoyed prior to starting your weight loss program. If you do choose to eat these foods, they must be moderated and used sparingly.

Keeping your daily carb count right around your ideal carb count is the easiest way to maintain your weight loss. Your weight may fluctuate by two or three pounds from time to time, but this is perfectly normal. This weight fluctuation is due to hormonal changes in your body.

During maintenance you'll also learn how to overcome your previous bad habits. Losing weight and keeping it off means dealing with real-world situations. You'll develop coping strategies for stress eating, emotional eating and holiday eating. You'll also develop plans for dealing with eating out in restaurants. The challenges during the maintenance phase are many, but they can be overcome.

It's all about preparation. When you've followed the Atkins diet plan for a long time, you've learned exactly how many carbohydrate grams you can handle. You've also learned what foods trigger carbohydrate cravings and which foods lead to binges. You've developed coping strategies over the course of your OWL and pre-maintenance phases that you will have to use in lifetime maintenance.

To prepare yourself for lifetime maintenance, make a promise to yourself never to go back to your previous weight. Make the commitment by donating all of your "fat" clothes. This way, if you do start to gain more than five pounds, you'll know that you have to buckle down and eat better. Also, write down in a journal or in a list format all of the benefits of being at your new, thinner size. Write about how much better you feel and how healthy you are. This will cement your new way of life into your mind and your heart.

Choose your lifetime maintenance weight goal range. This is a range of weight that is acceptable to you. For example, if your initial weight loss goal was to

be 165 lbs, your lifetime maintenance goal will be 160 to 170 pounds. If your weight starts to creep up toward 170 pounds, then you know that you are being too lenient with your carbohydrate grams. Never let your weight vary more than 3 to 5 pounds in either direction.

Make a commitment to weigh yourself at least once a week. This once-a-week weigh in will give you a good idea of how you are doing on your maintenance program. Use that weekly weight as a guideline for your approach in eating for the following week.

In addition to these guidelines, make sure to continue an exercise program. Your metabolism depends entirely upon the amount of exercise that you are getting. Making the commitment to exercise goes hand in hand with the commitment to keep eating correctly.

By following these guidelines, you can make lifetime maintenance simple and easy.

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