



Fat Burn Weeks 3 & 4

Am I a fat burning machine yet?

If you started this plan on a reasonably low carb diet while vigorously exercising a few times a week, you may already be a fat burning machine! Also, if you've followed low carb diets in the past, your body may be able to adjust back into fat burning more quickly.

For most of us though, studies show it takes around 4 weeks for mitochondria (the energy power houses in cells) to adapt to burn fat as fuel, so in this plan we will be following the low carb way of eating for 4 weeks in total to ensure we get you there.

Is breakfast the most important meal of the day?

This message has been hammered into us for decades, but the research on this is pretty dismal! People who eat breakfast tend to be healthier and slimmer, but this does not mean that breakfast itself is having this effect. People who eat breakfast are also following the guidelines to eat more vegetables, smoke less and do more exercise. Associations like this are very weak to base advice on. Luckily there's a movement of elite athletes and body builders who have shed light on this, many of whom have managed to reduce body fat significantly by eating breakfast later on in the day.

Breakfast is really just the name of the first meal of the day when you BREAK your FAST from not eating overnight. Your breakfast could be at 7am when you wake up, or it could be at midday.

Your appetite in the morning

In the morning, your appetite is actually the lowest of the day, explaining why a lot of people complain that they don't feel like eating first thing. If you aren't hungry in the morning and you are simply eating breakfast to have a healthy habit, think again. Listen to your body and trust your instincts. Eating your breakfast a bit later on, say around 10am makes perfect sense if this is when you start to feel hungry. But don't restrict food in the morning if you are ravenous, as this will just end badly!

A shorter window of eating

If you are eating breakfast a few hours later, and other meals around the same time as usual, this results in less hours throughout the day that your body will be exposed to insulin, your fat storing hormone. Avoiding late night dinners can also help to keep this window of eating shorter.

8-hour window of eating

You may wish to gradually eat your breakfast later and later over the next week to see what works well for you, but by the end of this week, you should ideally be eating within an 8-hour window. This results in a 16 hour fast each day, plenty of time for your body to burn through your body fat stores!

The times you choose to eat completely depend on you and may be determined by the time you wake up, your hunger signals, and when it fits into your routine easily. You may want to eat at 11am-7pm for example if you usually get home for dinner at 7pm with the family.

Here are a few popular eating times within an 8-hour window:

	10am – 6pm	11am – 7pm	12pm – 8pm
Breakfast	10am	11am	12pm
Lunch	2pm	3pm	4pm
Dinner	6pm	7pm	8pm

How many times to eat a day

We've become socially accustomed to eating 3 meals a day, and perhaps a couple of snacks in-between, but when following a low carbohydrate diet, you may find that you can go for much longer periods of time without getting hungry. This is due to blood sugar levels staying very constant rather than the blood sugar roller coaster causing hunger and cravings.

2 or 3 main meals

If you are having breakfast much later on around 12pm, you may be having this meal at the same time others around you are having their lunch, which is fine. If this is the case, you may not feel like having another meal until dinner at 8pm. Some people find this fits into their schedule easier as they don't have to think about an afternoon meal, but it's completely up to you. Whether you choose to have 2 or 3 meals a day, both are fine. Some people even choose to have all of their food in one meal for the day, but this can be a bit tough on your digestive system, so is not recommended.

Having more than 3 main meals is usually only needed if someone has digestive issues (i.e. can't digest much food in one time) or if they are body builders and find it hard to get enough

calories in 2-3 meals. If you are trying to lose weight and exercise moderately, 2-3 main meals is plenty.

Snacking

Snacking is one of the most common habits of overweight individuals. This is no surprise as we know that snacking triggers the release of insulin (unless a snack only contains fat) which prevents you from tapping into your fat stores for a couple of hours or so. Over the last couple of weeks, you may have been having one snack a day, but ideally you should try to gradually get out of this habit if possible. If you do fancy a snack though, healthy high fat foods such as an avocado or a handful of nuts would be fine.

Why low carb diets often fail

Following a low carbohydrate diet does not guarantee weight loss. Almost everyone does lose weight, however for some people this doesn't happen and there's a couple of reasons why this may be.

Calories count

Firstly, calories do count to a certain degree. A low carb diet should reduce your appetite, but some people are quite capable of eating a full tub of peanut butter or a huge block of cheese even when they are not hungry. If this sounds like you, try to be aware of your hunger signals, and remember that low carb calories still count as energy. Your cells may be fat burning machines, but if they are overflowing with fat from your diet, they will burn the fat from your foods rather than stored body fat.

Too much protein

Another common reason that low carb diets fail is due to eating excessive amounts of protein. This may surprise you as body builders seem to pack on the protein, but those that overdo it, may also find it hard to get their body fat very low. While protein is excellent for maintaining muscle mass, the body can only process a certain amount, so if you eat much more than your body needs, it is very easily stored as fat. If you are pumping iron at the gym for hours each day, your protein requirements will be higher, but if you are guzzling down the protein shakes hoping this will turn into muscle, unfortunately this is not the case and will most likely be stored as body fat.

If you include meat and fish in your diet, it's very easy to get enough protein in your diet. In fact, a diet lacking in protein is uncommon in developed countries. If you are vegetarian, as long as you aren't a 'chips and cheese' kind of veggie it is also fairly easy to get enough protein if you are regularly including foods such as eggs, lentils, beans, nuts, seeds, cheese, yoghurt and tofu.

Protein also has an impact on insulin production, not to the extent of carbohydrates, but still, eating protein will trigger your fat storing hormone. Fat is the only macronutrient which does not trigger the fat storing hormone, which is quite ironic with the name FAT!

'Low carb' processed foods

There's an abundance of health bars and shakes claiming to be low carb or sugar free these days. While some of them are fine, most of them contain high levels of unhealthy starch fillers such as maltodextrin, which break down to glucose molecules once eaten and trigger the release of insulin in your body. Also, these products often contain a lot of protein powders, which are fine in moderation but if you are living on these, again this will spike your insulin levels putting you into the fat storing mode again. If the ingredients of a bar consist of a long list of ingredients you have never heard of, it might be a good idea to skip on these and go for the safe option of real food which is more likely to be processed slowly in your body.

Emotional eating

We all do it. Eat when we are bored, eat when we are feeling low, or eat when we see an amazing cake even though we are completely stuffed with food! There's nothing wrong with this type of eating, and you should never feel guilty when indulging every now and then, as our bodies are designed to feel amazing when we do. But, it's also important to be in tune with your body's signals to hunger.

Physical cravings vs. habit

One of the biggest changes with following a low carb diet is that your appetite is likely to go down between meals, but the biscuit tin may still be looking at you. Your body physically may not be craving the calories or sugar, but if you are used to having this snack, your mind will be telling you to go for it. Next time you think about grabbing that passing cup cake, think to yourself, am I actually hungry or is this just a habit?

Removing temptations

The easiest way to overcome these habits is to remove any temptation. This is fairly easy to do in controlled environments such as at home, but not so easy when there's a birthday cake being passed around nearly every day at work. If you have a couple of simple rules set in your mind (e.g. no cake in the office unless it's my own birthday) then it's easier to say no rather than having the decision to make each time.

Allowing indulgences

If you think that you should never ever eat biscuits, cake or chips again, don't they just seem so much more appealing? 'The forbidden fruit' should never be forbidden for good. If you occasionally allow yourself to enjoy these foods with absolutely no regrets, such as at weddings and birthdays, you will have a healthier relationship with food. This makes the rest of your healthy diet much easier to follow too.

Satisfy your cravings

Whether you have cravings, or simply miss certain high carb foods, there's always a healthy alternative out there to try. Some of the most common cravings are either sweet foods, chocolate, or savory crunchy foods.

Try making some healthy goodies to keep you satisfied (see recipes). Chocolate protein balls, matcha latte and low carb crackers all seem too good to be true, but fit in with your plan for the next couple of weeks, so get prepping!

Ketosis

You may have heard the word 'ketosis' before, or a 'keto diet' which basically means that your body is using ketones for fuel instead of glucose. Ketones are derived from fat, so if you are in ketosis this means you are a fat burning machine!

If you want to test if you are in ketosis, you can buy urine strips called 'Ketone Sticks'. They are fairly cheap to buy, and a urine test is easy to do. You can otherwise buy blood test monitors if you want to track your levels more accurately, but for the purpose of this diet plan, urine strips are perfectly suitable. You do not need to measure your ketone levels, but it's quite motivating to see the colour chart showing how much of a fat burning machine you have become.

Is low carb better than low fat?

There's no clear cut answer to this question as the research shows that both a low carb diet and a low fat diet can both be effective for weight loss. We used to believe that fat caused weight gain simply because fat has more calories per gram of weight, but now it has been proven to be twice as satisfying.

The most distinct difference between the two diets is that people usually find it easier to lose weight on a low carb diet as appetite is reduced.

At the end of the day, no one diet fits all, but a low carb diet is often easier to stick to and considerably healthier (if done right with plenty of vegetables). Low fat diets often result in a host of deficiencies of fat-soluble vitamins, and the low-fat alternatives out there are not so satisfying!

Week 3-4 summary

Fat burn - summary

- Continue eating 20-60g carbs per day (see table)
- Only eat during an 8-hour window e.g. 10-6pm or 12-8pm
- Have 2-3 meals per day and no snacks (unless fat only snacks)
- Remember that calories still count, so don't overdo it if you aren't hungry
- Don't eat too much protein as this may be stored as fat
- Continue to only have alcohol on one night per week – no more than 6 units on this

day