Low-carb Diets and Fiber

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The low-carbohydrate diet bandwagon may not be the best way for older persons to lose weight. One of the problems is fiber—or rather, the lack of it. A healthy, well-balanced diet emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and whole grains—all good sources of dietary fiber—as well as many critical nutrients. Fiber provides bulk, important for regularity and for normal digestive function. Fiber is especially important for older people because as we age it takes longer for food to move through our system. This means more water is removed, leading to constipation, a common complaint as we age. Older people may resort to using laxatives, which can have an adverse effect on gastrointestinal health in the long run. Laxatives can also decrease nutrient absorption and cause nutritional imbalances.

For healthy digestion in the older years, include fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods as part of meals, and as healthful snacks. And, by the way, when adding foods with dietary fiber to your diet, it's important to drink adequate water to avoid GI discomfort!

Low-carbohydrate diets help some people lose weight, at least for the short term, but these diets can pose real risks for older people. For those wanting to lose weight, it's far safer to consider increasing physical activity and following a modestly calorie-restricted balanced diet, including foods with dietary fiber.

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