

Ask Leyla: Help! I've hit a weight loss plateau!

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Q: I've been following the low carb diet religiously, and it worked – at first. But now I've stopped losing weight. What could be causing this weight loss plateau?

A: There are many reasons for hitting a plateau while losing weight. Here are some reasons your weight loss may have stalled on your low carb diet.

Has your carb intake crept up? Are you eating more fruit or starchy vegetables than usual lately? Try limiting your fruit intake to only a cup of berries per day. Keep your vegetables low glycemic—no sweet potatoes, yams, corn (which is really a grain) or peas and carrots. It may help you to keep a carbohydrate budget.

Are you drinking diet soda? The sweetener aspartame (NutraSweet) is notorious for spiking blood sugar and insulin the same way sugar does. Unfortunately, sucralose (Splenda) isn't much better.

Are you relying on too many low carb products like bars and shakes? The sweeteners in those are usually sugar alcohols like sorbitol, maltitol or even stevia. But sometimes anything that simply tastes sweet is enough for your body to secrete insulin and put you back in fat storage mode. This is particularly true for those with hyperinsulinism and insulin resistance.

Are you consuming too many nuts or too much cheese? These often become the “go-to” foods for low carb dieters. The problem is that both nuts and cheese contain a LOT of calories, pushing you into the caloric stratosphere if you overdo it. While it's true you can eat more calories on a low carb diet, you still have to keep overall calories within a reasonable range.

Are you eating grains? Even healthy whole grains like steel-cut oatmeal or brown rice can spike blood sugar and insulin in susceptible individuals. For many, whole grains (or any grains) are more foe than friend.

Are you using condiments that contain sugar such as ketchup, barbecue sauce, relish, or bread-and-butter pickles? These are “hidden” sources of carbs that

could sabotage your weight loss efforts.

And finally, are you eating too much protein? Excess protein will turn into blood glucose, effectively shifting your metabolism OUT of ketosis.

Taking a critical look at your intake and making the necessary adjustments will help resume your weight loss.

To your health!