

Video Low carb for doctors (part 12)

Dr. David Unwin: The number of side effects I see is far fewer than you might expect. And I think that's because I don't tell patients how low-carb to go. I give them the information and let them interpret how they want to do it. So I suppose that means the patients take more responsibility for what then happens and maybe they do it more gradually, I don't know.

But let's go through the sort of things that patients might expect and you might expect to have to help them through. In the first week or so particularly people who were previously on a great deal of sugar for instance, they may find that tiredness is a problem and they might be surprised by how much they miss the sugar, so I've had people who didn't think they were sugar addicts and discover that they are.

And then they are quite exhausted, quite tired... So maybe it's not a good idea to start low-carb on a Monday morning if you got a difficult job. As part of that sometimes I've heard it called "carb flu" when people feel a bit headachy and weary all of the same time. I've actually found that it doesn't go on for very many days and usually clears up quite quickly.

Sometimes this is linked in with muscle cramps. Actually tell people about muscle cramps particularly those who are a bit sporty, because it can affect their performance and they care about that. With that group I tell them that actually some extra salt in the diet can be very helpful.

And I find it personally helpful myself. Constipation for some people is a problem and we often would say, "If you do become constipated what's the particular way that you tend to solve this problem for yourself?" So that we've checked in advance how they might do it. A little tip, there might be milled linseed added to plain yogurt is a really quick way to sort that.

But you know most of patients are going to be eating far more green veg on this diet so that actually constipation is something that's pretty easily sorted out. I had one patient who said she couldn't concentrate very well and that affected her at work. But that was only one in four and a half years and that was transient.

I suppose the thing is to tell them what they are likely to experience and other weird things, you'll have to encourage them to come back and see you. So transient headaches, transient tiredness and there should be maybe muscle cramps if it's not

salted out with increasing your salt intake, then these are things they need to come back and see you about.

Most of the things they notice are going to be good things. Most patients will come back and say "mental clarity", that they have more energy, that in the evening they are a bit bored and started going walks, so most of the side effects you'll actually come across are beneficial things that the diet has brought to these people and that is why it spreads and it's continuing to spread.