

Life Without Bread by Wolfgang Lutz and Christian Allan

In recent years, a slew of books on low-carbohydrate diets by medical doctors and nutritionists has appeared on the market. Some, like those by Dr. Robert Atkins, MD, have focused on using low-carb diets for weight loss. Others, like the Protein Power series by the Eades, have focused on the lifestyle of low-carb eating. None of the titles, however, has applied low-carb eating to a variety of diseases, showing how such a diet directly ameliorates and heals conditions like Crohn's disease, heart disease, and diabetes. With Life Without Bread, however, that pattern has ended. Lutz and Allan have done an excellent job in lucidly presenting a systematic approach to low-carb eating, its beneficial effects on a number of disease conditions and, most importantly, the scientific and clinical data to back up the claims.

Life Without Bread is mostly based on the clinical experience of Dr. Lutz, an Austrian medical doctor who has successfully used low-carb diets for decades on thousands of patients. The results of Lutz's clinical successes have been published in several European medical journals (mostly in German) and he even authored a German version of LWB as far back as 1967.

Although the German edition of LWB has had many favorable reviews, Lutz's work has been ignored in the United States. While the USDA was hawking the Food Pyramid to the American public, with its 6-12 servings of grain products a day (and with most of the Western world following this lead), Dr. Lutz and a handful of brave iconoclasts were preaching the virtues of high-protein, high-fat, low-carb diets for healthy living. After many years, Lutz succeeded in securing an American publisher and the results of his experience and research are now available to all English-speaking people.

The book begins with a definition of just what low-carb nutrition really is, followed by an historical survey of the approach by various doctors and nutritionists including such luminaries as William Banting, Weston Price, Vilhjamur Stefansson, John Yudkin and Carlton Fredericks. In Lutz and Allan's definition, the low-carb diet should include no more than 72 grams of carbohydrates per day. The rest of the diet should be made up of protein and fat from a variety of plant and animal sources.

Chapter Three focuses on the effect carbohydrates have on hormonal function. Despite the complexity of the subject matter, Lutz and Allan do a fine job of explaining the endocrinological details with a variety of graphs, illustrations and references.

Most of the following chapters focus on the benefits of low-carb nutrition for such diseases as diabetes, heart disease, gastrointestinal disorders, obesity and even cancer. The chapter on heart disease deserves special notice, for it effectively debunks the phony, but widely held, notion that saturated fats and cholesterol from animal foods cause this condition. The authors explain in detail the physiological benefits of saturates and simultaneously point out the flawed reasoning behind the Lipid Hypothesis. This chapter is really what sets the book apart from other low-carb titles currently available and is worth the price of the book.

Chapter 11 is also a distinguishing chapter in that it explains the evolutionary basis for low-carb eating. Lutz and Allan clearly show that the low-carb, high-fat, high-protein diet was the diet that humans evolved on and is what we are best suited for today. It is the high-carb, low-fat diet that is alien to our species.

The final chapter is also unique to the low-carb nutrition books available. It shows how to implement the low-carb eating plan in various people. Lutz and Allan wisely point out that older patients need to be eased into the program over a period of time, as opposed to jumping into it cold-turkey. They point out the possible health hazards of such an approach. This chapter should prove invaluable for clinicians.

Lucidly written, heavily referenced, and well-illustrated, Life Without Bread is a must-have book for physicians, nutritionists, and the public.



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