



Here's the real skinny on the no-carb and carb blocking fitness fad

By Mike Struckus
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What's the new skinny?

With the recent craze in the Atkins and South Beach diets, carb blockers may emerge as the next alternative to the no-carb diet craze.

The main ingredient in carb blockers is Phaseolamin, a non-stimulant, all natural ingredient that comes from white kidney beans. Phaseolamin neutralizes the enzyme alpha amylase, which is found in the pancreas and is a carbohydrate molecule. During the digestive process, foods high in carbohydrates such as pasta or potatoes turn into sugar, and can be burned off by exercise. Without exercise, however, the sugar calories build up and probability of weight gain increases. Phaseolamin allows the carbohydrates to pass through the body without gaining additional calorie intake.

The catch — carb blockers have not been proven to absorb pure sugars found in cakes, candy bars, or ice cream. So if you thought you could keep your sweet tooth and get away with it, carb blockers won't keep those sugars from finding a place in those love handles.

Dr. Joy Armillay, a nutritionist specializing in eating disorders in

Wyoming, is turned off by the supplement, along with the Atkins' Diet, because of the its elimination of a major nutrient to the body — carbohydrates.

"I don't follow any diet plan where a major nutrient is eliminated," she said. "I would not endorse the diet aid because you need carbs for protein metabolism."

Armillay has been practicing for 30 years and would rather have her patients change their behavior than take a diet pill.

Dr. Shana Lettieri, assistant professor of pharmacy practice at Wilkes University agrees with Armillay and believes changing ones lifestyle and eating a well balanced diet, all while increasing physical activity, is a better solution than the carb blockers.

"There is no medical research backing that it (carb blockers) work," said Dr. Lettieri.

She explained carb blockers first appeared in the 1970s but were banned by the FDA because they were shown to be unproven and had no benefits. In 1994, however, the Dietary Supplement Health Education Act allowed marketers to manufacture the product.

The Food and Drug Administration has not approved carb blockers, and on Dec. 30 issued a warn-

ing to manufactures not to sell ephedrine, a supplement similar to the carb blockers in that it helps in weight loss. Unlike the carb blockers, however, ephedrine also increases physical performance and energy levels.

Tim Carroll, a sales representative for The Fitness Headquarters in Wilkes-Barre, said he hasn't seen a significant increase in customers purchasing the carb blocker supplements, but rather is still seeing people consume the products with ephedrine in them.

"The carb blockers, since they came out, have not shown and increase or decrease in sales," says Carroll. "But since ephedrine will be illegal soon, people are stocking up on that."

The future for carb blockers might increase once ephedrine products become illegal, but ac-

cording to Carroll, it is debatable whether or not people will try the newer supplement.

Brian Stevens is a partner in the business at The Fitness Headquarters and explained the supplement does work, but believes there are other alternatives.

"Our society wants the quick fix," Stevens said. "The best way is to have balance, to eat the right amount of protein, carbohydrates, and watch your calorie intake. That's the ideal solution."

He added that he would recommend the carb blockers to a person who has low will power because "something is better than nothing."

Larry Danko, who for 14 years has owned Danko's All-American Fitness in Plains, agreed with Stevens' sentiment and felt working out and having a well-bal-

anced diet is better than taking a carb blocker because of the side effects and the fact it blocks the nutrient.

"Moderate your carbs and increase some of the protein, but realize you have to work," he said.

He believes the supplements will increase their sales because of the popularity with the no-carb explosion, but he won't recommend them to a new member looking to stay fit or lose weight.

Ann Giardina owns the Weight Loss Management Inc. in Kingston and she recommends the carb blockers but only with exercise and a careful watch on what else you eat.

"The facts are you need a sensible diet and a lifestyle change, along with watching the calories," Giardina said. "Diet and exercise go hand and hand."