
Introduction

Have you ever wondered what to make of all the mixed messages about what constitutes a healthy diet? One week the news tells us of a study showing, for example, the tremendous health benefits that come from consuming coconuts and coconut-based foods, like coconut oil. But then a couple of months later, we're inundated with breaking news headlines about a new study that shows coconut foods contain too much saturated fat and will thus clog your arteries and give you heart disease. It's so much to take in; how in the world can the average person, busy with work and family, try to make sense of it all? Trust me, I've been there. I used to weigh over 400 pounds even though I thought I was doing all the right things nutritionally—they just didn't work for me, no matter how hard I tried.

My name is Jimmy Moore, and I transformed my own weight and health by doing nearly the exact opposite of all the things I'd been told to do my entire life to be healthy.

The Government Is Wrong: Testifying on the 2010 Dietary Guidelines

On July 8, 2010, I was one of only fifty American citizens to present oral testimony in Washington, DC, about the proposed Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. These guidelines are released every five years and represent the official policy of the United States government for healthy eating. They are inserted into every part of American society through food stamps, school lunch programs, and even food allowances for members and families of the US military.

Yes, it's a big deal, and that is why I thought it was important enough for me to travel all the way to Washington, DC, on my own dime and share my

point of view with the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. Of the fifty people who testified before the committee at the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) on that hot summer day, only two of us were there as individuals—most of the rest were representing some special interest group (the soy lobby, the dairy lobby, the egg lobby, the salt lobby, and so on).

The vast majority of those who were testifying did so with extremely drab, boring, and monotone speeches about why their proposals should be taken under consideration blah, blah, blah in the official Dietary Guidelines. You could really tell their hearts weren't in it; they were simply paid to be there and put on record what was in the best interests of their corporate clients. Authentic testimonies were few and far between that day.

After enduring this agony for a couple of hours, it was finally my turn to share my three-minute remarks as speaker #26. I wanted to get the attention of the panel members, who had been looking down and taking notes through most of the testimonies, only occasionally glancing up at the parade of lemmings that was being ushered in front of them. I nervously but confidently stepped up to the microphone to share an impassioned speech with them (without the aid of any prepared notes) about how my life had improved dramatically because I had refused to accept the ideas that they were promoting to the American people as the only way to attain optimal health. I spoke from the heart because I've lived what I was sharing with them and have witnessed the power of my message in the lives of so many who follow my work. I don't remember much about the actual testimony I was giving because I was so caught up in the emotions of the moment. But one of my friends who was there said that when I began to speak, every single member of the Scientific Advisory Board and the government leaders looked up at me to listen intently to what I had to say.

Here are those remarks verbatim, according to the court reporter at the USDA:

Hi, my name is Jimmy Moore and I am from Spartanburg, South Carolina. I have a website called Livin' La Vida Low-Carb. And in January of 2004, I started on a low-carb diet because after years of frustration trying to follow the Dietary Guidelines that you guys put out every five years, I was failing. It was not working for me. I was a 410-pound man, high cholesterol, high blood pressure. I was in really bad shape at the age of thirty-two, and it wasn't until I was able to think outside the box and go beyond what my government was telling me was healthy that I was finally able to get my life back and my health

back. And today I stand here not just on my behalf, but [on behalf] of the hundreds of thousands of people that read my blog [and] listen to my radio show. They are real people, and I wanted you to see a real person whose life has been changed by not doing the things that you told them to do, [by] eating more fat, eating less carbs, not worrying about cardiovascular exercise until I fall out. Those things didn't work for me. And it wasn't until I could find what did work for me that I finally realized, you know, the experts on this panel may not be the true experts in this whole thing.

We really need to get away from one set of guidelines for all Americans. I propose that you have multiple guidelines that people can choose from, multiple options, because we don't all wear the same shoe size. I wear thirteens. Everybody wear thirteens in here? No. The same goes for our diet. We need to have a diet that will [cater] to the metabolic needs of the individual, whether they have obesity, whether they have diabetes. Those are the things that need to be considered. And if we do those things, then I think we are going to be better off.

Otherwise, we are going to be here five years from now with the same people testifying, everybody coming before you with the exact same lobbying for all these things. And what is going to change? I daresay obesity is going to be worse, diabetes is going to be worse, heart disease is going to be worse, and I am going to ask you, "Why?"

It was gratifying to hear from so many people who came up to me after my testimony to share their appreciation for what I had to say. That was what made it worth all the effort to be there. In fact, one security guard asked me if I had a business card so he could check out my blog to learn more about the work I was doing. He said that he could tell there was something about me and my story that was different from most of the others who testified. That was an awesome confirmation that choosing to speak from my heart and letting the words flow freely was the right choice. I'm so glad I did!

I have no grand illusions that what I said that day made any difference at all in what eventually became the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. But I am so happy that I testified and represented all of the people out there who have been harmed by what the USDA and Department of Health and Human Services have said is a healthy diet. I hope that by 2015, when we debate the next set of dietary guidelines that will become the basis for MyPlate (formerly the food pyramid), these governmental bureaucrats

will have seen the writing on the wall about the effects of their devotion to heavily promoting grains and demonizing fat. We're approaching a tipping point when it will become next to impossible for them to ignore the science. Hopefully this book will help move that process along a little quicker.

Think about it for a moment: if the USDA were a business and the state of public health reflected their profit margin, they would have gone bankrupt many years ago. In just the past few decades, the rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses have gotten considerably worse. And do you know what's most shocking about that? The spike in all of these ailments coincides almost perfectly with the implementation of the government's Dietary Guidelines in 1980. Coincidence? I think not.

There's a saying that insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. And that's precisely what has happened to national nutritional policy in the United States in recent years. The government ignores studies that don't fit within a preconceived template of a low-fat, low-salt, calorie-restricted, high-carb, plant-based diet. But this one-size-fits-all approach to eating does not work for the large segment of the population that is dealing with obesity and other metabolic chronic health issues. In fact, the statistics prove that this message has been an utter and dismal failure for America, and it's time for the USDA and Department of Health and Human Services to realize the error of their ways.

My Story: Veteran of Every Fad Diet and Still 400 Pounds

I'm sure glad I found my way off of the roller coaster ride of nutritional guidelines and poor health a decade ago. In January 2004, when I was thirty-two, my weight had gotten up to 410 pounds. I grew up in a family that was always dealing with weight issues. My mom was on every low-fat diet program that was ever invented, and we always had rice cakes and skim milk in our kitchen. She finally became so frustrated by her inability to lose weight that she elected to have gastric bypass surgery in December 2003. I remember thinking at the time that if my next attempt to lose weight wasn't successful, I would likely follow in her footsteps. Thankfully it never came to that.

Decades of poor eating habits, little exercise, and a general sense of apathy about trying to live healthy had all caught up to me, but I thought that

my weight was just the genetic hand that I had been dealt and there was absolutely no hope for ever overcoming it. It's a truly helpless, trapped feeling to believe that you will always be fat and unhealthy and there's nothing you can do about it. And that's exactly the way I had felt for most of my life.

Don't get me wrong, though; I had still tried all of the diet trends, including drinking Slim Fast, taking Dexatrim pills, and eating rabbit food all day long—but none of them seemed to help. In 1999 I tried an ultra low-fat (almost no-fat) diet because we have always been taught that eating fat makes you fat. I did surprisingly well on it and lost 170 pounds in just nine months. But there was one major problem: I was constantly hungry, which made me feel irritable, tired, and like I was going out of my mind! My wife, Christine, will tell you I was “hangry”—so hungry that it made me angrier than the Incredible Hulk! And my stomach was so bloated and big, I felt like I was a lot *worse* off than I was before my weight loss. One day Christine asked me if I would go to McDonald's and get her an Extra Value Meal, and I asked her if I could have a Big Mac meal “just this one time.” Well, anyone who has ever been fat knows exactly what happened next.

That was the end of my low-fat diet. I gained back all of the weight I had lost and then some, until I made my way over the 400-pound mark for the first time in my life towards the end of 2003. Christine was becoming increasingly worried about my health, and for good reason. Although I didn't have any major health problems at the time, I was on prescription medications for high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and breathing issues. Even before that, in 1999, when I watched my brother Kevin deal with the ramifications of a series of heart attacks that nearly killed him, I knew I needed to find a way to become healthy that would be effective, safe, and sustainable over the long term. But getting to the point of desiring sincere change took a series of events that began in the fall of 2003.

At the time, I was a substitute teacher filling in for a middle-school English class. As I began writing instructions on the chalkboard for the lesson that day, I heard a voice yell out from the back of the room, “Man, Mr. Moore is really fffffffaat!” There were about two seconds of dead silence and then the loudest, most raucous roar of laughter you've ever heard. Ever so slowly I turned in the direction of the boy who said it and nervously joined in the laughter—mostly to keep from crying!

That was the first spark that led me to seriously look for a way to get my weight and health under control for good. Other signs that I desperately needed to do something about my obesity soon followed. There were

countless reminders in my daily life that change needed to come quickly: constantly ripping the back side of my pants getting in and out of my car, having trouble getting up off the couch without assistance, not being able to go to the movies or fly on an airplane because I couldn't fit into the seats, and, most disturbingly, the judgmental looks on the faces of the people I encountered. It was all waking me to the reality that I had gone too far in allowing myself to reach this point.

One prominent and lasting memory is from the annual Fall Festival at my church. There was a rock-climbing wall there, and I was watching kids and adults alike scramble up and down that thing like they were Spider-Man. Of course, I thought to myself that it looked pretty easy and anyone could do it. So I stood in line to try my hand at scaling the wall for myself. After strapping on all the safety lines and gear to begin my climb, I stepped up to that wall and reached high for something to grab on to. When I attempted to step on one of the lower rock ledges, I had trouble lifting myself up because of my weight, and my foot slipped almost immediately. I tried again, and this time my foot slipped off and turned sideways, causing some minor pain in my ankle. I looked around at the crowd of people who were watching my every move and embarrassingly had to forfeit my attempt to climb the wall. That event remains an indelible experience in my mind, and at the time it was a blazing sign that something drastic had to change in the very near future. But what could I do that would be any better than all my futile attempts to lose weight in the past?

Just thinking about going on yet another diet made me sick to my stomach. It's considered common knowledge that to lose weight, you have to cut your calories, reduce the amount of dietary fat you consume, and exercise more, committing yourself to spending hours on the treadmill every week. So the default weight loss plan that so many of us fall into is a low-fat, low-calorie diet with regular trips to the gym several times a week.

But I vividly recalled the intense hunger and frustration that I experienced when doing that in 1999, and I realized there had to be a better way. It was fortuitous that my mother-in-law decided to get me a diet book for Christmas that year. Does any other son-in-law get weight loss books from their wife's mom as a holiday gift? I sure did! And in retrospect, I'm so glad and grateful for that year's Christmas present, which changed the course of my life forever. Thanks, Libby!

Turning It Around: Finding Dr. Atkins' Low-Carb, High-Fat Approach

My mother-in-law had given me diet books for Christmas in the past as a not-so-subtle reminder that she thought the man her daughter married was fat and needed to do something about it. I pretended that this wasn't hurtful, but it was. Hey, I knew I was a very large man and needed to get my weight under control. I just needed to find a healthy plan that would work for me. But that year, she gave me just the plan I needed to make that happen. The book was *Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution*, which outlined the diet created by the late, great Dr. Robert C. Atkins. I had heard so many things about this diet, good and bad, but I had never taken the time to actually read the book. Now that I owned it, I had no excuse not to find out what the Atkins diet was truly all about.

Funny enough, back in 1999, when I was doing that virtually no-fat diet, one of my friends asked me if my weight loss was the result of the Atkins diet. "Are you kidding me?" I responded. "No, that's one of the most unhealthy ways you could possibly use to lose weight." In fact, I added, "I would *never* do a low-carb diet like Atkins because it's too unhealthy." Famous last words. It just shows my ignorance and stubborn refusal to open my mind to other possibilities beyond the conventional dietary wisdom. Considering that today I'm best known as the "low-carb guy," there's a certain bit of irony in those words. Never say never.

Reading Dr. Atkins' book from cover to cover in the week between Christmas and New Year's, my initial reaction to the concept of a low-carb, high-fat diet was utter contempt. How on God's green earth can you eat more fat, like butter, full-fat cheeses, and red meat, without negative consequences to your health? Doesn't this Dr. Atkins guy know those things will clog your arteries, give you heart disease and cancer, and ultimately kill you? And what did he mean, cut way down on carbohydrate-based foods? Who could ever live without bread, pasta, sugar, and starchy foods? Aren't they what give your body the energy it needs to operate? What a complete and utter farce of a nutritional plan! Again, ignorance is bliss, and it all has a humorous twist looking back on this now over a decade later.

After mulling the book over during the next couple of days, I came to the stark realization that every single previous attempt I had made to lose weight involved cutting down on my overall fat intake, avoiding saturated fat in particular, eating lots of "healthy" whole grains, and counting every

single calorie I put in my mouth. While this way of eating resulted in some initial, nominal weight loss, it always ended with my going back to my old eating habits and ultimately getting right back to the weight I was before I started (and eventually even heavier). I wanted to avoid that trap this go-round, and the low-carb, high-fat diet was the one weight-loss strategy I had never really tried before. Although I'd said just five years prior that I'd never go on the Atkins diet, here I was, primed to make it my New Year's resolution to lose weight on the famous low-carb approach.

On January 1, 2004, I took the plunge and started on the Atkins diet. It was a complete shock to my system. Up to that point, I had been consuming, on a daily basis, two whole boxes of Little Debbie snack cakes; big plates of pasta; sausage, egg, and cheese biscuits from McDonald's; honeybuns and giant chocolate chip cookies from 7-Eleven; and sixteen cans of Coca-Cola. Yes, I was a bona fide carb addict, through and through. I was easily consuming well over 1500 grams of carbohydrate in my diet every single day, and I didn't even think twice about it. Is it any wonder my weight got up to over 400 pounds?

Now I was suddenly shifting my diet from that ungodly amount of sugary, processed carbs down to just 20 grams a day. If you don't think that will have a physiological effect on your body, let me tell you—it does! I've never taken any drugs in my life, but if this comes even close to what it feels like to detox from crack cocaine or heroin, then remind me to never start.

Thankfully the pain of transitioning from my old diet to the Atkins diet only lasted a couple of weeks before I began feeling energetic and alive again. It was as if a dark cloud of despair had been lifted from my head and I realized that this was what “normal” was supposed to feel like. For the first time in my life, I began to feel hopeful that I was going to finally grab back the reins and take control of my weight and health.

Thanks mostly to repeated messages by the mainstream media, the Atkins diet has a reputation for being all about consuming gobs of meat, eggs, cheese, and bacon every single day. Contrary to popular belief, that is *not* the Atkins diet—not by a long shot! While the Atkins diet is too complicated to describe in just a couple of sentences, we'll talk about it in more detail in chapter 2. For now, know that Dr. Atkins did not write about just cutting your carbohydrate intake, eating “low-carb” packaged foods, and consuming only meat, eggs, and cheese.

So how did being on the low-carb, high-fat Atkins diet work for me? By the end of the first month, I had shed a total of thirty pounds. Holy cow! At

the end of the second month, when I'd started going to the gym to do something with all this extra energy I suddenly had surging through my veins, another forty pounds were gone. By the end of one hundred days, I had lost one hundred pounds, and I knew something special was happening.

Words cannot describe how I felt going through this incredible journey, and I truly will never be the same again. Although it wasn't an easy road by any stretch of the imagination, I am so thankful I found the healthy low-carb lifestyle, because I went on to lose a total of 180 pounds in one year. More important than my weight loss, though, is the fact that low-carb living gave me my health back. All of those prescriptions I was taking for high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and breathing problems were history within nine months of being on the Atkins diet. Who says your health doesn't improve on the low-carb lifestyle? (We'll have plenty more to say about that later in this book.)

Let me express here my incredible gratitude to Dr. Atkins for helping to change my life through his diet. Since I read his book, my life hasn't been the same. I'm honored and blessed to have a very popular health blog and three highly respected iTunes health podcasts dedicated to spreading the message of low-carb living.

Though I never had the privilege of meeting Dr. Atkins in person, none of the success I have seen would have been remotely possible without the inspiration and education that came from that amazing man. His legacy is still making ripples in the world over a decade after his tragic death due to an accidental fall on an icy New York City sidewalk. His memory lives on in those of us who have picked up the baton and continued the race for low-carb living. God bless you, Dr. Atkins, for saving my life and the lives of millions of others who are still benefitting from your passionate zeal about low-carbohydrate nutrition and what it can do for our health.

And hats off to Jackie Eberstein, a registered nurse who worked with Dr. Atkins for three decades in his New York City clinic and who continues to teach about low-carbohydrate lifestyles today. Additionally, Veronica Atkins has been instrumental in continuing the legacy of her late husband by creating the Veronica and Robert C. Atkins Foundation and funding research professorships at prominent universities around the United States, including the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Texas, Southwestern; Columbia University; the University of Michigan; Washington University; and Duke University.

Giving Back: Showing Others How I'm "Livin' La Vida Low-Carb"

As 2005 rolled around and people began to comment on my very noticeable weight loss, they wanted to know how I did it. After telling my Atkins low-carb weight-loss success story at least a bazillion times, I finally decided I would create an online journal or website to talk about what I did and help others find the same success I did. I had barely even heard of a blog when I decided to start one in late April 2005, but a friend of mine told me how incredibly easy it was to set one up and start writing right away. Sharing my thoughts in written form had been a passion of mine since high school, long before the Atkins diet was ever on my radar screen. So it only made sense to combine my enthusiasm for and skill with the written word with my newfound commitment to healthy living the low-carb way. It was a match made in heaven, and I was ready to take on the world! And I've never looked back.

Almost immediately people began flocking to my new blog, which I dubbed *Livin' La Vida Low-Carb*. The blog's readership has grown exponentially since it first went online in April 2005, and it now reaches nearly 200,000 visitors each month. I've always been excited about educating, encouraging, and inspiring others who are overweight, obese, and unhealthy to do what I did. Because I've been there myself, I am able to share firsthand experiences of the struggles that come with being a sick, morbidly obese man, what it took to climb out of that hole, and the triumphs I experienced when I did. It's my passion to be a beacon of hope for those who think, as I once did, that they are destined to be fat and unhealthy forever. Never, ever give up!

In October 2006, I began doing what I'm perhaps most famous for when I started my iTunes podcast, *The Livin' La Vida Low-Carb Show with Jimmy Moore*. It has since become one of the top-ranked health shows on the Internet today with nearly 900 episodes featuring mostly informal interviews with the best and brightest names in diet, fitness, and health. I have two other iTunes podcasts—*Low-Carb Conversations with Jimmy Moore & Friends* and *Ask the Low-Carb Experts*—that I also use to spread the message of healthy living far and wide.

In August 2013, I released my book *Cholesterol Clarity: What the HDL Is Wrong with My Numbers?* with an internationally acclaimed publisher, Victory Belt Publishing. It features the expertise of my coauthor, Dr. Eric

C. Westman, an internist and researcher from Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, as well as exclusive interviews with twenty-nine of the world's foremost experts on cholesterol. I've been privileged to foster some truly meaningful relationships with a virtual who's who of everyone who matters in the world of health. That includes Dr. Westman.

I first met him in person at a low-carb nutritional health science conference in Brooklyn, New York, in January 2006. I had been blogging for less than a year but had an intense desire to learn more about low-carb eating, which had helped me shed the pounds and given me my health back, so I could share it with my blog readers. I was invited to a symposium put on by the Nutrition and Metabolism Society, which featured extremely technical lectures from medical doctors, diet researchers, and various other experts. My eyes were completely glazed over by the medical jargon being thrown around. My education in political science and English wasn't much help as I tried to make sense of it all.

When one of the lecturers started talking about a treatment concept known as PEP-C during his talk, the gentleman to my right leaned over to me and whispered, "Shouldn't that be a Diet PEP-C?" That man was Dr. Eric Westman. Right then and there I knew there was something special about him. As I got to know him and heard the story of how he initially got interested in low-carb diets, I realized he had a similar drive to get this message out to the people who needed it most. And it was his experiences with patients like me, who found success in achieving weight loss and regaining their health by reading Dr. Atkins' book, that led Dr. Westman to seek out answers about why the diet worked so well. That search led him to contact Dr. Atkins directly back in 1999.

Dr. Westman wrote a letter to Dr. Atkins, who called him and personally invited him to see how he treats patients with nutrition. So he took a trip to New York City to visit the Atkins Center for Complementary Medicine and observed how Dr. Atkins and his staff were helping patients suffering from obesity, diabetes, and many other chronic health issues using low-carbohydrate nutritional therapies as part of their medical treatment. Seeing all the incredible health improvements Dr. Atkins was getting in his patients, Dr. Westman asked if he would be interested in funding a study to scientifically demonstrate the effects of a low-carb, high-fat diet. He agreed, and Dr. Westman began to conduct the very first clinical trial on the Atkins diet.

The findings from the original pilot study, which followed fifty people on a low-carbohydrate diet over a six-month period, were presented at the American Heart Association's annual meeting in Chicago, Illinois, in November 2002. It showed that patients on a low-carb, high-fat diet lost weight and improved their cholesterol levels. But Dr. Westman wanted to see how the results he was witnessing compared to those on the popular low-fat diet. So he followed up the pilot study with a full-fledged randomized, controlled trial consisting of 120 people who were taught how to follow a low-carb diet or a low-fat diet and adhered to it for six months. What he found was that both groups showed improvement, but the low-carb diet was better for weight loss and improved metabolic syndrome best. The results of that study were published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* in 2004 and paved the way for a bevy of groundbreaking research on carbohydrate-restricted diets.

The Next Step: A Ketogenic Diet

So you might be thinking right about now, “Your story of transforming your weight and health is great and all, but what the heck does all of this have to do with the title of your book, *Keto Clarity*? I haven't heard anything about that yet!” I'm so glad you asked. Once you understand our own experiences with nutrition and the positive impact that it can have on your health, then you'll be ready to learn why a low-carb, high-fat diet may be just what you need to improve your health—and that is where the idea of keto (short for *ketogenic*) comes into play. Just as we did for cholesterol and heart disease in *Cholesterol Clarity*, we're going to make the ideas behind keto and the reasons it works easy to understand and apply to your own situation.

We'll cut through all the massive amounts of confusion that have been brought on by widespread misinformation about keto. Yes, this book will likely rock the very foundation of everything you thought you knew about nutrition and health. But now that you've heard how we became interested and involved in closely examining the low-carb, moderate-protein, high-fat, ketogenic diet, it's time to share some of the knowledge, experience, and wisdom we have gained along the way to help you in your pursuit of optimal health.

The truth about ketogenic diets deserves to be told because it very well could be the missing piece of the puzzle for you, a family member, or a

friend. There's never been a book like this one that puts together all the pieces about practical ways to implement a ketogenic diet for optimizing health. Think of this book as your definitive guide to the health benefits of a low-carb, high-fat diet. Let the reeducation process begin.