

what is specific carbohydrate diet

Specific Carbohydrate Diet (SCD) is a dietary regimen designed to help manage various gastrointestinal disorders, particularly inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, as well as conditions like celiac disease and irritable bowel syndrome. Developed by Dr. Sidney Baker and later popularized by Elaine Gottschall in her book "Breaking the Vicious Cycle," the SCD aims to eliminate certain carbohydrates that are not easily digestible, thereby promoting gut health and overall well-being. This article explores the principles of the Specific Carbohydrate Diet, its potential benefits, foods to include and avoid, and practical tips for implementation.

Understanding the Specific Carbohydrate Diet

The Specific Carbohydrate Diet is based on the premise that certain carbohydrates can exacerbate digestive disorders. The diet restricts complex carbohydrates and sugars that are poorly absorbed in the intestine, which can lead to fermentation and the production of harmful byproducts. By eliminating these carbohydrates, the SCD aims to restore the balance of gut flora, reduce inflammation, and alleviate symptoms associated with digestive disorders.

Key Principles of SCD

- 1. Carbohydrate Restriction:** The diet focuses on eliminating all disaccharides (two-sugar molecules) and polysaccharides (many-sugar molecules) that cannot be easily digested. This includes foods high in starch and sugar.
- 2. Focus on Simple Carbohydrates:** The SCD allows for the consumption of monosaccharides (single-sugar molecules) that are easily absorbed by the body. This includes glucose and fructose in moderation.
- 3. Natural Foods:** The diet emphasizes whole, unprocessed foods. This means that individuals following the SCD should prioritize fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, fish, nuts, and certain dairy products that are fermented.
- 4. Gut Healing:** The primary goal of the SCD is to promote healing of the gut lining, restore healthy gut flora, and reduce inflammation.

Potential Benefits of the Specific Carbohydrate Diet

Many individuals have reported significant improvements in their health after adopting the SCD. Some of the potential benefits include:

- **Reduced Symptoms of Digestive Disorders:** Many people with conditions like Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, and IBS find that following the SCD helps alleviate symptoms such as diarrhea, bloating, and abdominal pain.

- Improved Nutrient Absorption: By healing the gut lining and reducing inflammation, the SCD may enhance the body's ability to absorb nutrients from food, which is crucial for overall health.
- Increased Energy Levels: As digestive symptoms improve and nutrient absorption increases, many individuals experience higher energy levels and improved overall vitality.
- Better Blood Sugar Control: The SCD can lead to more stable blood sugar levels due to the elimination of refined sugars and complex carbohydrates, which can cause spikes and crashes.
- Weight Management: Some people find it easier to maintain a healthy weight on the SCD, as the focus on whole foods can lead to a more balanced diet and reduced cravings for processed foods.

Foods to Include in the Specific Carbohydrate Diet

Following the SCD requires careful selection of foods. Below is a list of foods that are generally allowed on the diet:

1. Fruits: Fresh fruits such as berries, apples, and bananas can be consumed in moderation.
2. Vegetables: Non-starchy vegetables like spinach, zucchini, carrots, and broccoli are encouraged. Potatoes and corn are typically avoided.
3. Proteins: Lean meats, fish, eggs, and poultry are staples in the SCD.
4. Nuts and Seeds: Almonds, walnuts, and sunflower seeds are permitted, as long as they are not processed with added sugars or unhealthy oils.
5. Dairy: Fermented dairy products such as yogurt and certain cheeses (like cheddar and mozzarella) are allowed, as the fermentation process reduces lactose content.
6. Oils and Fats: Healthy fats like olive oil, coconut oil, and avocado oil are recommended.
7. Homemade SCD-Approved Foods: Certain baked goods and snacks can be made from SCD-friendly ingredients, such as almond flour or coconut flour.

Foods to Avoid on the Specific Carbohydrate Diet

To successfully follow the SCD, it is crucial to avoid certain foods. Here's a list of foods typically restricted on the diet:

1. Grains: All forms of grains, including wheat, rice, and oats, are strictly prohibited.
2. Sugars: Refined sugars, including table sugar, honey, and high-fructose corn syrup, should be eliminated.
3. Legumes: Beans, lentils, and peanuts are not allowed due to their complex carbohydrate content.

4. **Starchy Vegetables:** Potatoes, corn, and sweet potatoes are avoided as they can cause digestive issues.
5. **Processed Foods:** Any food that contains additives, preservatives, or artificial ingredients should be avoided.
6. **Certain Dairy Products:** Milk and other non-fermented dairy products are typically restricted due to their lactose content.

Practical Tips for Implementing the Specific Carbohydrate Diet

Transitioning to the Specific Carbohydrate Diet can be challenging, especially for those accustomed to a more traditional diet. Here are some practical tips for successful implementation:

1. **Educate Yourself:** Read books and resources on the SCD to understand the principles and guidelines thoroughly.
2. **Plan Your Meals:** Create a meal plan that incorporates SCD-friendly foods. This will help you avoid temptation and ensure that you have suitable options available.
3. **Cook at Home:** Preparing meals at home allows you to control the ingredients and ensures that you are eating foods that comply with the SCD.
4. **Experiment with Recipes:** Explore new recipes that fit within the SCD framework. There are numerous SCD-friendly cookbooks and websites available.
5. **Join Support Groups:** Connecting with others who follow the SCD can provide motivation, support, and valuable tips.
6. **Track Your Progress:** Keep a journal of your symptoms and dietary changes to monitor your progress and make adjustments as needed.

Conclusion

The Specific Carbohydrate Diet offers a structured approach to dietary management for individuals with various gastrointestinal disorders. By focusing on easily digestible carbohydrates and eliminating those that exacerbate symptoms, the SCD promotes gut healing and overall health. While it can be challenging to adopt this diet, especially at the outset, many individuals find that the potential benefits—such as improved digestive health, better nutrient absorption, and increased energy—make the effort worthwhile. As with any dietary change, it is advisable to consult with a healthcare professional or registered dietitian before starting the SCD, particularly for those with underlying health conditions.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Specific Carbohydrate Diet (SCD)?

The Specific Carbohydrate Diet is a dietary approach that eliminates certain carbohydrates to help manage gastrointestinal disorders, particularly in individuals with conditions like Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, and irritable bowel syndrome.

What types of foods are excluded in the Specific Carbohydrate Diet?

The SCD excludes all grains, starchy vegetables, refined sugars, and most dairy products, focusing instead on non-starchy vegetables, fruits, nuts, and meats.

How does the Specific Carbohydrate Diet work?

The diet works by restricting carbohydrates that are difficult to digest, which can help reduce inflammation and improve gut health by allowing beneficial bacteria to thrive.

Can the Specific Carbohydrate Diet help with weight loss?

While weight loss can be a secondary benefit of the SCD due to its restrictive nature, it is primarily designed for managing gut health rather than for weight loss.

Is the Specific Carbohydrate Diet suitable for everyone?

The SCD is not suitable for everyone; individuals should consult with a healthcare professional before starting the diet, especially those with specific dietary needs or health conditions.

What are some common challenges when following the Specific Carbohydrate Diet?

Common challenges include food preparation, finding suitable products, potential social situations involving food, and the initial adjustment period as the body adapts to the new diet.

Are there any scientific studies supporting the Specific Carbohydrate Diet?

Some studies suggest that the Specific Carbohydrate Diet may help reduce symptoms in individuals with certain gastrointestinal conditions, but more research is needed to fully understand its effectiveness.

How can someone start the Specific Carbohydrate Diet?

To start the SCD, one should educate themselves on allowed foods, plan meals, and gradually eliminate restricted items while monitoring their body's response to the dietary changes.

What Is Specific Carbohydrate Diet

What Is Specific Carbohydrate Diet

Related Articles

- [what states allow online eye exams](#)
- [what is pedagogy of the oppressed](#)
- [what is the difference between summary and analysis](#)

[Back to Home](#)