

Consumers Ponder Life After Atkins

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Back-to-basics healthy eating and the GI diet are among the contenders for America's attention

Chicago (August 5, 2005)- Atkins Nutritionals' bankruptcy came as no surprise to many food and health experts. In 2004, Mintel's Global New Products Database (GNPD) tracked more than 2,600 new products that hit the U.S. market with low or no-carb claims. In the first half of this year, that number dropped to 700 new introductions.

"Atkins did a good job helping consumers understand the role of carbohydrates in healthy eating," said Lynn Dornblaser, director of consulting services for Mintel's GNPD. "The diet came in very strongly and quickly, then vanished. This is a frequent trend with diets, and their disappearance is inevitable."

With the Atkins diet crashing financially, many consumers are in search of the "next big thing." According to analysts at Mintel International, there are a few new trends sparring to take Atkins' place.

American dieters are beginning to show interest in the glycemic index (GI) diet, which is gaining popularity in the UK and Australia. While it has not yet experienced the same type of success in the U.S., the GI diet is catching some consumer attention. This diet is seen as addressing the specific needs of individual dieters, as opposed to the one-program-fits-all dieting approach.

"Chronic dieters are constantly on the lookout for new schemes and plans," said Marcia Mogelonsky, senior research analyst for Mintel. "In contrast, the general public is more likely to adopt an eating plan that includes healthy foods, sensible eating, and exercise programs. The old fashioned method of eating healthy food is making a comeback."

In a recent Mintel report on attitudes towards diet and exercise, only 11 percent of respondents were willing to try a new diet. However, a staggering 67 percent were trying to eat healthier foods. This indicates that many dieters are shifting to more traditional dieting behavior that includes eating better and exercising.

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