

## Public Abstract

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Title: The Rise And Fall Of Fad Diets: How The News Media Frame And Represent The Atkins Diet, 1972-2005

The purpose of this research is to study how newspapers, an important outlet from which individuals seek health information, frame fad diets. This study examines coverage of the Atkins diet, one of the most popular fad diets in history, and how it was framed from 1975—when it was first introduced—to 2005. This research also uses the public health model to look at the presentation of public health facts in Atkins diet stories. Specifically, the research evaluated: how journalists framed stories in relation to health organizations' or medical research's publicized health effectiveness of the diet; the extent to which public health facts are present in stories about the diet; and which sources reporters use to gather health information about Atkins.

This study included a content analysis of 92 news stories, results of a Lexis-Nexis search. Stories were required to contain at least 500 words, and have Atkins in the story headline. Results from the research showed that more stories were framed negatively than positively, and most contained health facts that were not in support of the Atkins diet. This indicates that the story frames primarily reflected the publicized health effectiveness of the diet. On an average, there were (almost) at least one of each public health fact present in each story. Among the public health facts, risk factors ran the highest frequency while the economic impact public health variable was rarely present in most stories. This suggests that reporters took more value with public health variables that were more “individually” focused, rather than those that focused on public issues. And in regards to sources, journalists primarily turned to scientists/researchers for health information about the Atkins diet. This demonstrated that most reporters sought medical-and-research-supported health information for Atkins stori