Please tell my wife that the high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet will help me lose weight. She gets very anxious that I am going to have a heart attack or something, and I really want to lose weight!

Well, that’s not a question – it’s a request. OK, I will tell your wife and the other readers. Yes, a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet may help you lose weight – but, but, but…

The real question should be, is such a diet advisable? Going under names like “Protein Power,” or the Atkins Diet, these diets exclude carbohydrates and push protein, so one is usually eating meat, cheese, fish, milk or soy protein, and little grains, fruits and vegetables.

They do work, because the body mobilizes fat to provide energy, and because the demand is greater than the metabolic pathway can cope with, a lot of ketones (compounds containing a carbonyl group, joined to two carbon atoms) are produced. These contain energy, but it is wasted by being urinated away. So the diet works. In the short term, a few days of this may not have measurable harmful effects; but over a longer term, it is not advisable. Ketosis (when your body switches from using sugars and carbohydrates that turn to sugar for fuel, to using existing fat for fuel) causes headaches, weakness, dizziness, and even dehydration.

Such diets may be dangerous for those with hidden heart or kidney disease. Persons on blood pressure medication may find the ketosis interferes with the medicine’s effectiveness. Prolonged ketosis can cause kidney damage, also. When fruits, vegetables and grains are missing from the diet, vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals will also be in short supply, and risks of cancer, osteoporosis and heart disease will rise.

High protein, in many situations, means high fat—and often the saturated kind too, e.g.: in those steaks. People love gimmicks, fads and fancy, so you will probably ignore my advice – but a well-balanced, low-calorie diet complete with exercise and lots of water is much more sustainable.

Therefore, your weight loss is also likely to be much more sustained.

So, should your wife worry? Probably not, because you will likely do what you want to anyway, and she doesn’t make any difference even with all her anxieties. She would do better to plan the available foods in your house carefully by shopping with a thoughtfully made, healthy list.