The recent flurry of interest in high-protein diets as a means of controlling weight has the western world in a "low-carb" frenzy.

Many paunchy "wanna-be thins" will try anything except a reduction in calories or increase in exercise, it seems.

While high protein is associated with a greater level of satiety, and hence may permit tolerance of a lesser calorie intake, there is a concern over the concomitant increase in saturated fats, and the long-term effects of such a radical change from centuries-old diets, traditional to many cultures.

Complex carbohydrates found in unrefined foods, eaten without too much manipulation, have provided the basis of human diet for centuries, and have well-known positive effects. Concern exists over long-term effects of high-protein (and, coincidentally, high-cost) diets.

An interesting recent study, while not by any means the last word on the subject, highlights the need for caution.

Dr. David Gardiner of the Colorado Center for Reproductive Medicine in Englewood, said a diet containing 25 percent of calories from protein disrupts the development of early mice embryos.

While all scientists recognize the vast difference between mice and men, the demonstration showed that doubling protein intake halved the normal development of embryos. In other words, instead of 70 percent normal development, mice on high-protein diets had only 36 percent normal development. This, while not a final and definitive answer, means that high protein diets, if nothing else, are food for thought.

Persons trying for pregnancy might be smart to eat a traditional diet rather than the latest fad diet.