

What is the keto diet?

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The majority of diets come and go, and if you've tried as many as I have with less than great results, then you often wonder why you would bother with all the effort. Weight Watchers has been around for decades, and newer ideas like Atkins and Paleo have somewhat fizzled out a bit. I've tried them all and even added some of the more obscure ones to the mix like the chipotle diet. Believe me, it's even less fun than it sounds. The problem I have had with the majority of these diets is that you can achieve some initial results quickly only for them to fizzle out and never actually get to your weight goals. That was my experience until I stumbled upon keto.

What is ketosis?

In a normal high carb diet, your body processes the carbs and transforms them into blood sugar (aka glucose). This is the raw energy source needed by all your muscles and organs to function. In a state of ketosis, your body switches from using glucose as a source of energy to ketones. These ketones are used to break down fat storage in your body to release the energy. It's basically what you try to achieve each time you head to the gym. By using up all your readily available glucose, your body will temporarily switch to fat storage for energy. In this case, it's just for a short time. However, on the keto diet, you aim to create [this](#) state of ketosis permanently to maximize your ability to shed those unwanted pounds.

What are the benefits?

The main aim for anyone starting a diet is going to be weight management. But keto goes far beyond that when it comes to benefits:

Targeted fat loss throughout the day once you've reached full ketosis.

- Reduced and stable glucose levels help to fight diabetes.
- Improved mental clarity and performance.
- Improved digestion and immune system.
- Stable blood sugar levels reduce hunger cravings.
- Used to treat epilepsy for over 100 years.
- Boosted physical performance through higher energy levels.
- Reduces blood pressure as the weight starts to tumble.

As you can see, you could be doing your health, wellbeing, and happiness a huge favor. It's not just the weight loss you can look forward to, but a complete change in your life.

So, what does it involve?

How to get started on the keto diet

The concept of keto is simple: you cut out the majority of carbs and replace them with healthy fats. To put this in numbers, for the average person you will need to reduce your carb intake to below 50 grams per day. When you keep in mind that the average breakfast cereal would probably be more than that, then it doesn't leave much wiggle room. Essentially, you want to be getting 75% of your calories from healthy fats, 20% from protein and 5% from carbs. When you consider how many carbs the average American takes in every day, that is a huge shift and not one you achieve without careful planning.

Who should not be doing the keto diet?

There are two reasons why you shouldn't just start a low-carb diet. Firstly, if you're pregnant or breastfeeding, then such a drastic shift is not advisable. There are a few unpleasant side effects in the initial stages (more on these below), which aren't ideal for your baby and can mess with your milk supply. Secondly, if you have any form of diabetes, especially medication dependent, or you take drugs to regulate your blood pressure, then talk to your doctor before starting. It's not that this

diet will be harmful, but your medication dosages may need to be adjusted.

How do you know that you're in ketosis?

Once you have adapted your daily meal plan and cut your carbs to a minimum, there will be a transition phase known as keto induction. This can take from 2 to 10 days depending on your food and exercise routines. But how can you tell if you've finally got to full ketosis? One way is to listen to your body and observe the side effects which we'll get into shortly. Things like brain fog, fatigue, and overall low energy levels will start to improve, and that is a clear sign that your body has adjusted. A much simpler method is to use ketone urine test strips which will tell you what your level of ketones is. It's a good thing to buy before you get started, as it's the most reliable test to do.

Achieving optimum results

Once you have entered ketosis, you have to maintain and even fine-tune your diet. If your initial goal was 50 grams of carbs per day, then you can start to lower that to 20 grams gradually. The result will be a further boost to your weight loss efforts, as more energy needs to be sourced from alternative resources. But relying on your diet alone can bring you to a stage where your weight loss stalls. This is very common and basically a sign that your body has reached a very high level of efficiency. One thing I personally rely on a lot is ketone supplements. Especially on days when I head to the gym or go for a longer run, these supplements give me an extra energy boost. They are also a great option when you first get started, as they will help reduce the [side effects](#).

Common side effects

The dreaded keto-flu is something that always pops up when you research this diet. Yes, it does exist, and the symptoms can be quite unpleasant. But, they only last a few days, and there are many things you can do to reduce these effects. The most common things you might encounter are:

Dizziness
Fatigue
Disrupted sleep
Brain fog
Reduced muscle performance
Constipation or diarrhea

These are all related to a sudden change in the food you eat, but once your body switches to ketosis, you will see all of these symptoms reverse. Not only that, but higher levels of energy than before are very common.

To avoid and mitigate these symptoms you should definitely consider using keto supplements. They will not only help you feel better but also speed up the time it takes to get to full ketosis.