



The Keto Diet: What Is It and Should I Try It?

Ketogenic dieting refers to a style of eating that is predominantly comprised of fat (65-70% of caloric intake) and void of carbohydrates (<5-10% of caloric intake). Following this style of eating will put the body into a state of ketosis, which is characterized by having a high level of ketones in the blood. Ketones are a by-product of the incomplete breakdown of fat which occurs when there is a lack of carbohydrates present and the normal energy metabolism pathways get rerouted.

The ketogenic diet has been around for many years and was initially used to treat and manage seizure disorders in children. Dr. Atkins popularized this diet in the 1970's and instructed his patients on how to use this style of eating to lose weight as well as reduce cardiovascular risk and diabetes. The Ketogenic Diet has made a resurgence once again in the weight loss industry touting many benefits including fast and significant weight loss along with increased energy, increased mental clarity and reduced insulin resistance.

This diet does come with side effects and is not safe or appropriate for everyone. It is extremely important to check with your physician prior to starting this diet to ensure it is a safe route for you to pursue. This diet is not advised for patients with type-1 diabetes or any type-2 diabetic on insulin or certain oral medications. This diet is also not advised for pregnant or breastfeeding women. There are other medical contraindications for this diet, so it is imperative to not only discuss this with your doctor but to also work with a registered dietitian on the implementation of the diet to ensure you are meeting your fiber and micronutrient needs. Common side effects of the ketogenic diet include bad breath, headaches, lethargy (specifically in the first few weeks of the diet), cramps, reflux, nausea, constipation and dizziness. Not everyone will experience these side effects. The composition of your dietary intake prior to beginning this plan will be one factor dictating the severity of the symptoms.

If you are cleared by your doctor to try the ketogenic diet I recommend beginning by tracking your dietary intake on My Fitness Pal and ensure you are making a caloric reduction from your baseline calories. Tracking and accurately weighing and measuring your foods are important components of this diet, especially if you want to do it safely and effectively. While the calorie content of the diet will differ from person to person the macronutrient targets are as follows: 65-70% fat, 20-25% protein and 5-10% carbohydrates. The diet requires the elimination of all starches and fruits and if you chose to include dairy it must be full fat plain Greek yogurt or cheese (the other forms are too high in carbohydrates). Non-starch vegetables should be included and prioritized since it is the main source of fiber in this style of diet, along with some dietary fiber from flaxseed, chia seed and the occasional 1/2 cup of fresh berries. Protein is also not "free" on this diet. Eating too much protein will prevent you from entering ketosis. For most protein portion sizes are between 2-5oz per meal. The primary calories will come from fats including olive oil, nuts/ seeds, avocado, olives, hard cheese, butter, and other sources. Review the sample meal plan on the back of this form so see what a balanced ketogenic diet would look like.

MEAL	FOODS	KCALS	CARBS	FAT	PROTEIN	FIBER
BREAKFAST	2 Eggs cooked in 2tsp. of olive oil + 1/2 (50g) of a medium avocado + 2 cups of fresh spinach	313kcal	8g	27g	15g	5g
LUNCH	4oz of baked salmon on 2 cups of romaine lettuce hearts + 1/2 cup of cucumber + 2Tbs. of Ranch dressing	406kcal	10g	30g	24g	2g
SNACK	4oz of Full Fat Plain Greek yogurt + 1Tbs. of Chia Seeds + 1oz of macadamia nuts	370kcal	13g	29g	15g	7g
DINNER	4oz of grass-fed 85/15 Ground Beef Burger wrapped in lettuce + 1 slice of tomato + 1 slice of Cheddar Cheese + 100g of cooked broccoli + 100g of cooked cauliflower + 2tsp. of butter	453kcal	9g	32g	30g	6g
TOTALS		1542kcal	41g (11%)	118g (68%)	83g (21%)	20g