

Why's Everyone Talking About Keto and What Is It Anyway?

Keto is probably one of the most popular diets around right now, especially for weight loss. But what exactly is it, and what does it entail? Here we will take a look at how this diet works, which foods you can and can't eat while you are on it, and consider whether overall it is an effective dietary plan.

The ketogenic diet is a high fat, moderate protein, and low carb diet that gets its name from the ketones it causes the body to produce. Ketones are chemicals that the liver makes from fat when there isn't enough glucose in the body to convert into energy. Reducing the amount of carbohydrates you eat is said to kick start this process because glucose is sourced here. So the body is forced to rely on fat that would otherwise be stored. This is known in the keto diet as 'ketosis.'

Most people on this diet consume as little as 20-50 grams of carbs a day compared with the 225 grams or more that make up the average person's diet. The rest is replaced with fats. The reason followers of this diet choose fat over protein is that excess protein can also be converted into glucose.

Compared with other kinds of diets, the keto plan has some key benefits. Most notably, people like the clear guidelines on what you can and can't eat, which takes the stress and uncertainty out of planning meals.

Fats should make up 70-80 percent of the calories in the diet. This includes olives, avocados, coconut, chia seeds, and nuts. Protein should be 10-20 percent so chicken (dark meat if possible), beef, tuna, eggs, and carbs just 5-10 percent. The bulk of these carbs should come from high-fiber, water-rich fruits and vegetables to boost hydration and keep the digestive system functioning well. Beans, grains, low-fat dairy products, and sugary drinks should all be avoided.

In addition, keto seems to be as effective as other diets for weight loss and more effective than low-fat diets for many people. Yet, it doesn't leave its followers feeling hungry all the time as others might. The reason for this is that it suppresses ghrelin, which is a hormone that contributes to hunger and is produced when the body feels like it is not getting enough food, i.e., when on a diet.

Keto also dramatically changes the way that the brain is receiving energy. In fact, the diet was initially designed to reduce incidences of epilepsy in sufferers and doctors have been using it to this purpose since 1920. More general followers of keto claim that the effect of this is enhanced energy levels and mental clarity. Reasons for this are that keto seems to boost both the number and performance of mitochondria. This is the part of the cell where energy production occurs, although further research is needed to determine whether or not this is actually the case.

However, the keto diet is not without its drawbacks. Followers can experience some uncomfortable side effects in the first few weeks of switching to this food plan, such as constipation, heart palpitations, and low energy. Both physical and mental performance are also often reduced at this time. This has become known as 'keto flu'

as some of the other symptoms, e.g., fatigue, headaches, brain fog, dizziness, and nausea, resemble this type of illness.

All in all, keto does seem to balance a good number of benefits with a few moderate drawbacks. However, each person's body chemistry is different, and it could be that this is the perfect diet for you – or not. The only way to really find out is to give it a try.