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Chapter **1**

Embracing Keto for Your Well-Being

The keto diet has exploded in popularity in the last 10 years, but other than it being a great way to lose weight, what do you really know about this popular diet? Is it really a healthy way to lose weight? Is there more to it than eating bacon and eggs? We are here to help you figure out whether the keto diet is right for you and to teach you the basic steps of safely and effectively following a keto lifestyle. In this chapter, we introduce the core concepts of the keto diet.

Exploring the Keto Diet

The ketogenic diet (also known as the keto diet) is a tried-and-true method to improve your health by working with your body through your dietary practices. The keto lifestyle can help you

- » Have more energy
- » Quickly lose weight
- » Improve your heart health
- » Improve your ability to focus

Though it has become more popular recently, the keto diet has been used for almost a hundred years to prevent disease and help the body heal. That's an amazing track record for any diet! The benefits of the keto diet are just that good.

So, what exactly is the keto diet? The keto diet involves eating foods that are

- » High in fat
- » Moderate in protein
- » Very low in carbohydrates

Easily digested carbohydrates fuel weight gain and cause unhealthy spikes in blood sugar. Throughout a lifetime, this can really take a toll on your health.

The keto diet puts your body into a metabolic state called *ketosis*, when your body uses fats, rather than carbs, for fuel. You'll learn everything to know about ketosis in Chapter 2!

There are many misconceptions about nutrition in general, and the keto diet especially. The keto lifestyle is much more than “bacon, eggs, and cheese” — although you can eat bacon and cheese as much as you'd like! It won't clog your arteries or make you fat, nor will it increase your cholesterol levels if you follow a whole-food-based keto lifestyle.

For example, one of the most common misconceptions is that fat is bad for you. Fat is actually very good for you, keeps you feeling fuller longer, helps you lose weight, and improves your health over the long term.

Additionally, you don't need to eat many carbs as part of a healthy lifestyle. For many reasons, your body stores fat — and not carbs — for energy. Fat provides 9 calories (energy) per gram, while carbs only provide 4 calories per gram! Fat is a slow, continuous energy source compared to carbs, which are glucose at the most basic level. Carbs spike blood glucose and require your body to produce insulin to then reduce blood glucose to safe levels.

Eating a whole range of low-carb foods is the key to a healthy lifestyle. The best part is that keto is a flexible diet with multiple variations to fit your lifestyle and goals! It isn't a one-size-fits-all plan.

There are several different variations of the keto diet. Take a look at each one to see which version fits your personal goals and the way you prefer to eat.

Standard ketogenic diet

The standard ketogenic diet is the most basic, straightforward version of the keto diet. It is the most researched and has been around the longest of the various types of keto diets. It clearly breaks down the sources of your daily calorie intake so you can easily start your keto diet. Here is what to eat on the standard keto diet:

- » **Fat:** 70 percent of your daily calories
- » **Protein:** 25 percent of your daily calories
- » **Carbohydrates:** 5 percent of your daily calories

On this diet, you generally eat about 25 to 30 grams of carbohydrates per day; however, this number is flexible. This amount of carbs is about one-fifth to one-tenth of what many Americans eat per day, so you can start to see why making such a radical change from a carb-based diet to a fat-based one has a massive, positive impact on your health and energy levels.



REMEMBER

The standard ketogenic diet's ratio is 70:25:5 in terms of calories from fat, protein, and carbs as shown in Figure 1-1. You should aim for up to 30 grams of carbs per day.

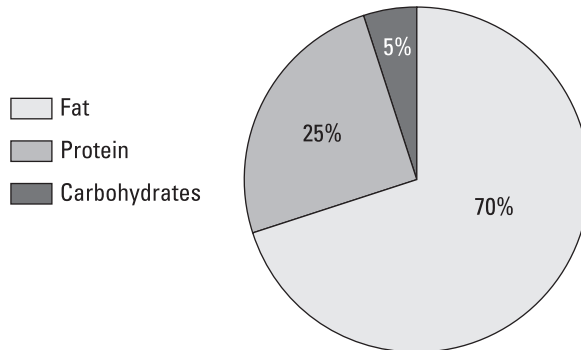


FIGURE 1-1: Standard keto diet percentages.

Targeted ketogenic diet

The targeted keto diet is often used by athletes because it's more flexible when it comes to carb intake. This diet allows more carbs when you know you will be especially active. The extra carbs are burned immediately during your intense workouts, allowing you to stay in ketosis but still get a bit of extra energy.

Keep in mind that this is not a free pass to eat as many carbs as you want. About 25 to 30 grams of easily digestible carbs are okay about 30 to 45 minutes before a

hard workout like high-intensity interval training (HIIT), 30 minute or longer jogs, hour or longer of weight lifting. After that exercise is over, you go right back to the regular keto diet. Remember to count the total number of calories (including your pre-workout carbs) when coming up with your daily energy intake.



REMEMBER

It is important to eat only enough carbs to fuel your workout so your body returns to burning fats after you exercise. It's a good idea to get your body adjusted to the standard keto diet for a few months before switching to a targeted keto diet.

Cyclical ketogenic diet

The cyclical keto diet is another flexible version of keto that caters to athletes. It allows athletes to up their carb intake for a short time to “fuel” themselves for a performance. Once the big event is over, you return to the standard keto diet. Although this may kick you out of ketosis, the intense activity ensures that all those extra carbs are burned.

The cyclical keto diet is also good for people who need cheat days. You can go 5 days on the keto diet and then cheat a little on the weekends. However, it is important to remember that on those cheat days, you still shouldn't binge on carbs. It can be tough on the body to go from no carbs to high carbs. Instead, opt for a low-carb diet on cheat days, ranging from 150 to 200 grams of carbs rather than the lower quantities typically allowed on the keto diet. You won't be in ketosis on the cheat days, but it can sometimes help people who really miss the carbs.



TIP

Consider the cyclical keto diet if any of the following applies to you:

- » **You are an elite bodybuilder or short-distance sprinter who has been training for years.** And you've noticed drops in your performance and realize that you need more carbs to fuel your intense level of activity.
- » **You are otherwise healthy and don't have any metabolic reasons to believe that “carb loading” will affect your health.** If you notice an improvement in blood pressure or blood sugar levels, cyclical keto is *not* for you because you may lose all your gains when you cycle out of ketosis.
- » **You work out intensely and on a specific schedule.** Your high-carb days should coincide with the days that you're at the gym. Also, you need to be able to cycle in and out of ketosis by completely depleting the excess carbs you consume on your workout days and then switch back into a keto diet on non-carb-loading days.

Generally, cyclical keto helps with gains for anaerobic exercises including 100-meter sprints, low-rep maximums (four to six) for weightlifters, or CrossFit circuits.

High-protein ketogenic diet

The high-protein keto diet is just as it sounds — higher in protein! Here is a quick look at the breakdown of a high-protein keto diet:

- » **Fat:** 60 percent of your daily calories
- » **Protein:** 35 percent of your daily calories
- » **Carbohydrate:** 5 percent of your daily calories

This version of the keto diet is great for anyone who is concerned about losing muscle mass or not gaining enough while working out consistently. Adding protein is a great way to help gain muscle and remain in ketosis. Keto is considered a *muscle neutral* diet, meaning you don't really gain or lose muscle because your body is efficiently utilizing the fat you eat and stored fat even while at a caloric deficit. This is another benefit of keto because on high-carb diets, when in a caloric deficit, your body more readily taps into muscle protein for the remainder energy, so you lose muscle in addition to fat.

Keep in mind, it's difficult, but possible, to get kicked out of ketosis if you go higher than the recommended 35 percent of calories from protein (see Figure 1-2). Remember to eat a range of proteins that are nutritious and filling.

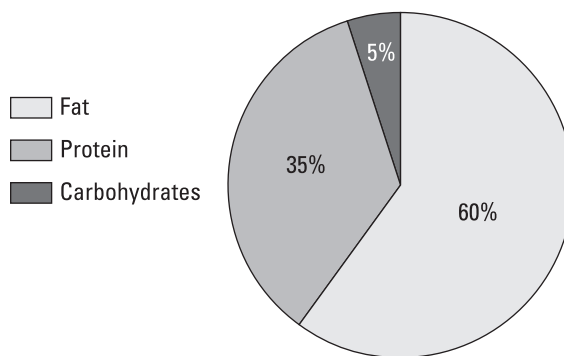


FIGURE 1-2: High-protein keto diet percentages.

Setting Realistic Expectations on Keto

Before you dive into the keto diet, you should be sure that it is the right fit for you. Having realistic expectations is key to your success. While the keto diet can be adapted to fit the needs of almost everyone, you should fully understand the benefits and the few side effects of the diet (which we go over in Chapter 2). Keep reading to really assess whether keto is right for you.

Use SMART goals to set yourself up for success

It's a good idea to set goals on any diet. We specifically like to use SMART goals. SMART is an acronym for

- » Specific
- » Measurable
- » Achievable
- » Relevant
- » Time-based

Goals should be specific. For example, a nonspecific goal would be to “lose weight” or “get in better shape.” You could lose two pounds and technically fulfill both of those goals, but you wouldn't really hit your goal. An example of a specific goal is this: “I want to lose 10 pounds of fat by June 1st.”

Instead of “losing some weight,” it's better to strive for a measurable goal like losing 10 pounds. You can also strive for completing a sporting event, such as a marathon, or a defined achievement, like benching or squatting a certain weight.

Another reason we often fail to achieve our goals is because the goals we set are not attainable, at least for that moment in our lives. Every person's body is unique; trying to achieve the body of a supermodel or bodybuilder isn't possible for most people, and that's totally fine! Use your goals to set yourself up for success. If last week you jogged for 10 minutes a day, next week try to jog for 12 or 15 minutes. If last week you worked out 3 days of the week, this week try to work out for 4 days. Small, attainable goals and improvements keep you motivated.

Your goals should be relevant to what's important for you. If you're trying to build muscle, and you set yourself a goal to run a marathon by a specific date, that most likely will not get you to the image of success you've painted in your mind, even if

you accomplish your goal. It's crucial to create goals that are relevant to achieving the success you really want.

Finally, make your goals time-based. Try to give yourself enough time to make them happen, but put some pressure on yourself. You may have specific goals that are well-defined and measurable; they're attainable and very relevant to your definition of success. If you say that you'll accomplish all of that "someday," however, you'll never hit the mark. You need to be pushed to meet your goals by a deadline, giving you a sense of urgency that you must keep pressing every day or you won't make it there.

The elements of SMART work together to create goals that are well-planned, clear, and trackable. This strategy completely applies to the keto diet.

Define your weight-loss goals or maintenance targets

So, what are your goals when it comes to the keto diet? Do you want to lose weight quickly and keep it off? Are you looking to decrease your risk of diabetes? Are you trying to improve your daily energy levels? The keto diet can help with each of those goals, but you need to define your personal goals before you jump into the keto lifestyle.

Having achievable targets helps you stick to your keto diet. When you have something you are working toward, you are more likely to continue with your keto diet commitment and achieve success. If you want to get healthy and stay that way, you can with keto!



REMEMBER

The keto diet may be for you if you are ready to commit to changing your diet and health in a positive way. Commitment and drive are essential to your success!

Measure your success

Success means something different for everyone; however, there are some telltale signs of success when you're on the keto diet that you'll recognize as you embark on your journey.

The first and largely most popular metric is weight loss.

In the first week, you'll likely lose 7 to 10 pounds. It's very important to understand that this isn't all fat. In fact, it's mostly water weight. It looks great and feels great on the scale and is a huge motivational boost to continue with the diet.

The reason you lose so much water weight initially is due to your body burning through *glycogen* (glucose stored in your muscles) and dumping all the water your muscles hold. After the first week, the weight loss will slow down but will be primarily fat loss, so keep on going!

As you lose weight, sometimes you may not see it in the mirror or even on the scale! There are a variety of reasons why this could happen, including the following:

- » Weighing in at different times of the day
- » Eating right before stepping on the scale
- » Water weight fluctuations due to alcohol, menstrual cycles, and so on

To counteract these potential issues, try keeping tabs on the way your body looks and feels so you know exactly how well you are doing on your keto journey. Grab a tape measure and write down your waistline measurement once a week. Take photos in the same light, at the same time of day, and in the same location once a week. Pay attention to how your favorite clothes fit. Also take note of how much more energized you feel throughout the day as your body burns fat for energy.

Deciding Whether Keto Is Right for You

Keto can be adapted to fit anyone's needs — whether they're seeking to lose weight, reduce their risk of diabetes, or improve their energy levels. In this section, we give you a better idea of why keto may be right for you.

You want to lose weight and keep it that way

If you've tried other diets and felt discouraged because the weight either barely came off or didn't stay off, the keto diet is for you. Keto has been shown in dozens of studies to help people lose weight faster than low-fat, high-carb diets. Keto turns your body into a fat-burning machine — quite literally. When in ketosis, your body readily burns fat for energy, including stored fat! Even when being on a caloric deficit, keto dieters report that they don't really feel hungry like they do on other diets. This is a huge benefit that is not to be overlooked. On most diets, when you're hungry, your first instinct is to go to your fridge or pantry and devour the first tasty thing you see. You don't get that kind of hunger pang on keto, and it more often leads to your success and longevity with the diet.

You want to avoid becoming diabetic

Going keto or low-carb is the number one way of avoiding, controlling, and even reversing type 2 diabetes. Not eating carbohydrates means that you don't get blood glucose spikes, which in turn means that your insulin doesn't spike, and your cells don't become resistant to insulin. When your cells become insulin resistant, the pancreas tries to make more insulin to make the cells respond. Eventually, your pancreas can't keep up, and your blood sugar keeps rising or stays at a dangerously high level. Lowering insulin resistance is the primary method of reducing your chances of becoming diabetic. The keto diet can help reduce your risk of getting type 2 diabetes — a widespread problem that leads to heart disease and other major medical issues.



WARNING

Please be cautious if you have type 2 diabetes. Research is showing that the keto diet may help cure type 2 diabetes and get people off medications, but diabetes can be a severe medical condition that requires a doctor's care. It's best to have the support of a doctor if you've already been diagnosed with diabetes and take insulin regularly, because the keto diet will likely reduce the insulin dosage that is necessary. It can also lower your blood sugar levels too much if you're already taking certain medications.

You feel tired and sluggish most days

Most people who are on the keto diet for more than 3 weeks feel like they have more energy, consistent energy levels throughout the day, and better mental focus. Hunger pangs and that “hangry” feeling after not having a meal on schedule are a thing of the past. Getting sleepy after lunch just doesn't happen on keto. The reason these symptoms are practically universal is because normally on a high-carbohydrate diet, your body relies on higher blood sugar levels to then convert into energy with insulin. On keto, you get to break free of these symptoms because your blood sugar stays relatively stable through the day. Even if you skip a meal, your body switches to burning stored fat for energy. With keto, you're always energized and don't feel sluggish at the end of the day.

Knowing When to Stop

Most people are able to stay on the keto diet indefinitely. However, there are a few occasions when you should stop the diet and reassess your approach. Additionally, if you have type 1 diabetes, please speak with your doctor before trying keto or making any dietary changes.

Signs of danger

Here are a few signs to look for:

- » You feel tired all the time.
- » It's hard to sleep at night.
- » Your bathroom habits have ceased.
- » You feel weak or notice muscle loss.
- » You experience hair loss or rashes on your skin.

If you have any of these issues while on the keto diet, it may benefit you to speak with your doctor or take a pause to assess what is going wrong. Take stock of what you are eating and drinking and what your diet may be missing.

When you've achieved your goals

Keto is perfectly safe long-term, and there's no need to stop being in ketosis if that's not what you want. If you feel great on keto and don't want to quit, simply don't!

Although weight loss is achievable on any diet by being on a caloric deficit, keto has been proven to be the most effective diet in terms of speed and overall health indicators. If you've hit your ideal weight, you can increase your caloric intake by eating more fat and protein. Now you can enjoy more food with the same benefits.

You may choose to start eating more carbs again, and that's totally fine. However, be prepared because once you start eating more carbs, the energy highs and lows of the day come right back, along with sugar cravings. Suddenly, you're back to fighting with your willpower, exactly what you were able to eliminate with keto. Eating more complex carbs, lower on the glycemic index, is the best way to reintegrate and reduce blood-sugar spikes. The *glycemic index* is the food rating system with a scale of 1 to 100 that estimates how much a food will affect your blood-sugar levels. You'll gain a more in-depth understanding about the glycemic index in Chapter 3.

You may want to start building muscle while maintaining ketosis. If that's the case, increasing your protein calorie ratio to 30 or 35 percent and reducing your fat calorie ratio to 60 percent is the best way to do this. This is the basis of the high-protein keto diet you read about earlier in this chapter.

Additionally, when you work out, you'll be able to increase your total daily net carbs to around 50 grams because your body immediately burns the additional carbs, allowing you to stay in ketosis. Adding muscle mass is great for your health and makes it harder to regain fat.

You can also try experimenting with intermittent fasting. Basically, you get a specific window during the day to have your meals, but you get a lot more freedom. For example, you can try a time-restricted fast like 16 hours off food, 8 hours on. That translates to not eating 16 hours a day (sleep included) and eating during an 8-hour window. If you eat for the first time at 12 p.m., then you can eat up until 8 p.m. Reducing the eating window naturally limits the amount of food you can eat, so instead of weighing or measuring food to restrict your portions, you simply follow the clock.

The best part is you can combine intermittent fasting with any diet to reap the benefits. For more information on intermittent fasting, see Chapter 7.

Living a sustainable life on keto

Once you've achieved your weight loss goals, you can stop eating at a deficit by increasing your caloric intake to maintain your weight and essentially go on cruise control. As long-time keto dieters, we achieved our personal goals after about one year of being on keto. After that, we continued the keto lifestyle for more than 7 years and are still going. In our case, we stick to it because we feel great every day, have high energy levels, feel sharp and focused, and our annual physicals always come back with great results.

The keto diet became a lifestyle for us, and it can become a lifestyle for you too. Although doing it for the shorter-term can help you reap some of the benefits, the simple truth is it is very easy to fall back into old habits and reverse your progress. The bigger benefits come with sticking to it long-term. You may even find that by the time you reach your goals, you don't want to go back to eating carbs.

