



The ketogenic diet consists of very low carb, high fat foods. It involves drastically reducing carbohydrate intake and replacing it with fat. This reduction in carbs puts your body into a metabolic state called ketosis. When this happens, your body becomes incredibly efficient at burning fat for energy. It also turns fat into ketones in the liver, which can supply energy for the brain.

Ketogenic diets can cause significant reductions in blood sugar and insulin levels. This, along with the increased ketones, has some health benefits.

The information presented here mostly applies to the standard ketogenic diet (SKD), although many of the same principles also apply to the other versions.

Different Types of Ketogenic Diets

Standard ketogenic diet (SKD): This is a very low carb, moderate protein and high fat diet. It typically contains 70% fat, 20% protein, and only 10% carbs.

Cyclical ketogenic diet (CKD): This diet involves periods of higher carb refeeds, such as 5 ketogenic days followed by 2 high carb days.

Targeted ketogenic diet (TKD): This diet allows you to add carbs around workouts.

High protein ketogenic diet: This is similar to a standard ketogenic diet, but includes more protein. The ratio is often 60% fat, 35% protein, and 5% carbs.

Foods to Choose

It's best to base your diet mostly on whole, single-ingredient foods. You should base the majority of your meals around these foods. You can eat a wide variety of tasty and nutritious meals on a ketogenic diet. It's not all meats and fats. Vegetables are an important part of the diet.

- meat: red meat, steak, ham, sausage, bacon, chicken, and turkey
- fatty fish: salmon, trout, tuna, and mackerel
- eggs: pastured or omega-3 whole eggs
- butter and cream: grass-fed butter and heavy cream
- cheese: unprocessed cheeses like cheddar, goat, cream, blue, or mozzarella
- nuts and seeds: almonds, walnuts, flaxseeds, pumpkin seeds, chia seeds, etc.
- healthy oils: extra virgin olive oil, and avocado oil
- avocados: whole avocados or freshly made guacamole
- low carb veggies: green veggies, tomatoes, onions, peppers, etc.
- condiments: salt, pepper, herbs, and spices

Foods to Avoid

Any food that's high in carbs should be limited. Common examples include:

- sugary foods: soda, fruit juice, smoothies, cake, ice cream, candy, etc.
- grains or starches: wheat-based products, rice, pasta, cereal, etc
- fruit: all fruit, except small portions of berries like strawberries
- beans or legumes: peas, kidney beans, lentils, chickpeas, etc.
- root vegetables and tubers: potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, parsnips, etc.
- low fat or diet products: low fat mayonnaise, salad dressings, and condiments
- some condiments or sauces: BBQ sauce, honey mustard, teriyaki sauce, ketchup, etc.
- unhealthy fats: processed vegetable oils, mayonnaise, etc.
- alcohol: beer, wine, liquor, mixed drinks
- sugar-free diet foods: sugar-free candies, syrups, puddings, sweeteners, desserts, etc.

Sample 1-week Keto Plan

Always try to rotate the vegetables and meat over the long term, as each type provides different nutrients and health benefits.

Monday:

- breakfast: veggie and egg muffins with tomatoes
- lunch: chicken salad with olive oil, feta cheese, olives, and a side salad
- dinner: salmon with asparagus cooked in butter

Tuesday:

- breakfast: egg, tomato, basil, and spinach omelet
- lunch: almond milk, peanut butter, spinach, cocoa powder, and stevia milkshake (more keto smoothies here) with a side of sliced strawberries
- dinner: cheese-shell tacos with salsa

Wednesday:

- breakfast: nut milk chia pudding topped with coconut and blackberries
- lunch: avocado shrimp salad
- dinner: pork chops with Parmesan cheese, broccoli, and salad

Thursday:

- breakfast: omelet with avocado, salsa, peppers, onion, and spices
- lunch: a handful of nuts and celery sticks with guacamole and salsa
- dinner: chicken stuffed with pesto and cream cheese, and a side of grilled zucchini

Friday:

- breakfast: sugar-free Greek, whole milk yogurt with peanut butter, cocoa powder, and berries
- lunch: ground beef lettuce wrap tacos with sliced bell peppers
- dinner: loaded cauliflower and mixed veggies

Saturday:

- breakfast: cream cheese pancakes with blueberries and a side of grilled mushrooms
- lunch: Zucchini and beet “noodle” salad
- dinner: white fish cooked in olive oil with kale and toasted pine nuts

Sunday:

- breakfast: fried eggs with and mushrooms
- lunch: low carb sesame chicken and broccoli
- dinner: spaghetti squash Bolognese

Healthy Keto Snacks

In case you get hungry between meals, here are some healthy, keto-approved snacks:

- fatty meat or fish
- cheese
- a handful of nuts or seeds
- keto sushi bites
- olives
- one or two hard-boiled or deviled eggs
- keto-friendly snack bars
- 90% dark chocolate
- full-fat Greek yogurt mixed with nut butter and cocoa powder
- bell peppers and guacamole
- strawberries and plain cottage cheese
- celery with salsa and guacamole
- beef jerky
- smaller portions of leftover meals
- fat bombs

Keto Tips

Although getting started on the ketogenic diet can be challenging, there are several tips and tricks that you can use to make it easier.

Start by familiarizing yourself with food labels and checking the grams of fat, carbs, and fiber to determine how your favorite foods can fit into your diet.

Planning out your meals in advance may also be beneficial and can help you save extra time throughout the week.

Many websites, food blogs, apps, and cookbooks also offer keto-friendly recipes and meal ideas that you can use to build your own custom menu.

Alternatively, some meal delivery services even offer keto-friendly options for a quick and convenient way to enjoy keto meals at home.

Look into healthy frozen keto meals when you're short on time.

When going to social gatherings or visiting family and friends, you may also want to consider bringing your own food, which can make it much easier to curb cravings and stick to your meal plan.

Tips For Eating Out While Following Keto

Many restaurant meals can be made keto-friendly. Most restaurants offer some kind of meat or fish-based dish. Order this and replace any high carb food with extra vegetables. Egg-based meals are also a great option, such as an omelet or eggs and bacon.

Another favorite is bun-less burgers. You could also swap the fries for vegetables instead. Add extra avocado, cheese, bacon, or eggs. At Mexican restaurants, you can enjoy any type of meat with extra cheese, guacamole, salsa, and sour cream.

For dessert, ask for a mixed cheese board or berries with cream.

Supplements for a Ketogenic Diet

Although no supplements are required, some can be useful.

- MCT oil. Added to drinks or yogurt, MCT oil provides energy and helps increase ketone levels. Shop for MCT oil online.
- Minerals. Added salt and other minerals can be important when starting out due to shifts in water and mineral balance.
- Caffeine. Caffeine can have benefits for energy, fat loss, and performance.
- Exogenous ketones. This supplement may help raise the body's ketone levels.
- Creatine. Creatine provides numerous benefits for health and performance. This can help if you are combining a ketogenic diet with exercise.
- Whey. Use half a scoop of whey protein in shakes or yogurt to increase your daily protein intake.