

# the dang life

## KETOGENIC DIET 101: A STARTER GUIDE

DECEMBER 27, 2019



Load up on fats, limit the carbs—that’s the motto of the Ketogenic diet. But thanks to Keto’s recent boom in popularity, the topic has become a much more talked about, studied, and extensive discussion. And with all the interest comes some confusion—“does it actually work?” “what’s the Keto Flu?”—so that’s where we come in.

We’re breaking down everything you need to know about the Ketogenic diet, from what it is and the research-backed benefits to tips for success, whether you’re a foodie, fitness buff, or curious chef.

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### WHAT IS THE KETOGENIC DIET?

The Keto diet is a high fat, moderate protein, low carb food plan. When you increase your fat consumption and decrease carbohydrates, your body has to adapt to using fat as fuel instead of glucose. This results in a nutritional state of Ketosis, which aids in weight loss, boosted energy, and positive effects on brain health.

### BENEFITS OF A KETOGENIC DIET

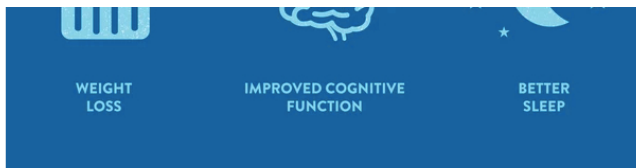


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With all the recent buzz surrounding Keto, it's no surprise that researchers have taken note. Numerous [studies](#) have investigated just how positive a Ketogenic diet can be for your physical and emotional health. Some of the benefits can include:

- Weight loss
- Lower cholesterol
- Balanced blood sugar
- Improved sleep and mood
- Better memory and cognition
- Reduced inflammation on the brain
- Positive effects on [neurological disorders](#) (epilepsy, dementia, ALS, etc.), as well as on cancers, metabolic disorders, and [endocrine disorders](#)

## HOW TO REACH KETOSIS

The idea of the Ketogenic diet is to “shock” your body into a metabolic state called Ketosis. Typically your body uses glucose (from carbohydrates) for immediate energy. But after you’ve curbed your carb intake for three to four consecutive days, your liver adapts by using fat—not glucose—for energy. The liver turns the fats into fatty acids, which then become “Ketones.” These Ketones are a safe, highly efficient source of energy that can be metabolized by your heart, muscles, kidneys, and brain.

By the [numbers](#), that means eating roughly 80% of calories from fat, 15% from protein, and 5% from carbohydrates. Nix starchy grains like rice and wheat, and instead, fill up on more satiating fats like avocados, eggs, and coconut (our personal favorite at Dang). Then, round out your meals with healthy protein like salmon and almond butter.

## SIGNS YOU'RE IN KETOSIS

If you want to go the official route, there are urine and blood Ketone meter tests, such as [Keto-Mojo](#), as well as the Keyto breath test. But for some people, all the measuring and micro-analyzing can get stressful. Instead, it's helpful to focus on your nutrient composition and look for these [tell-tale signs](#)—yes, some are less fun than others, but they're temporary!—that indicate you've reached Ketosis:

- **Weight loss:** Expect a rapid initial drop—[up to 10 pounds](#) in two weeks or less—before continuing slower, more steady weight loss if you stick to the diet.
- **More energy:** Once your body gets past the adjustment phase—dubbed the “Keto Flu,” which we detail below—you can adapt to fat as a consistent, efficient energy source. It's no wonder [studies](#) have shown a Keto diet vastly improves performance in endurance athletes.
- **Decreased appetite:** A Keto diet naturally suppresses hunger-stimulating hormones, particularly during week one.
- **Bad breath or “Keto breath”:** Ketones are made up of beta hydroxybutyrate, acetoacetate, and acetone. The last of those is the culprit behind “Keto breath,” which some say smells like metal or nail polish remover. The pungent breath is short-term—your body will adjust, but you can up your mouthwash and hydration to keep Keto breath at bay.
- **Increased urination:** Thanks to the Ketogenic diet's natural [diuretic effect](#), you'll need to head to the bathroom more, expelling mostly sodium and water, which accounts for much of the initial weight loss (a.k.a. water weight).
- **Dry mouth:** Beyond the fact that increased urination will make you more thirsty, every gram of glycogen holds 3 grams of water. Once you lose that store of water-rich energy, you're going to get [dehydrated](#). Drink plenty of water and electrolytes—you can add a little salt to maintain sodium levels—but it's best to avoid sports drinks, which are loaded with sugar.

## WHAT ARE MACROS—AND HOW MANY DO YOU NEED TO EAT?

If you're new to the Keto lifestyle, you'll hear plenty of talk about macronutrients or “[macros](#)” for short. These are the three main suppliers of nutrients in your diet and include fats, carbohydrates, and protein. The way our bodies respond to each is different. Carbs and protein are considered “anti-Ketogenic” because both nutrients, especially carbs, increase blood glucose and insulin. Since fat, on the other hand, consists of such a small amount of glucose and doesn't spike your levels, it's the cornerstone of this diet.

To help you achieve your Keto goals, aim to limit your Net Carbs consumption to [25-50 grams](#) per day (based on a 2,000 calorie diet). You can figure out the number of Net Carbs by subtracting the Dietary Fiber and sugar alcohol amounts from the total number of carbs. (Since your body doesn't actually absorb or process these two elements, you can take them out of the equation)

**HOW TO CALCULATE NET CARBS**

TOTAL CARBS - DIETARY FIBER - SUGAR ALCOHOL = NET CARBS

Nutrition Facts		Amount/erving		% DV	
Total Fat 10g		20%		100%	
Sati. Fat 5g		10%		50%	
Trans Fat 0g		0%		0%	
Cholesterol 0mg		0%		0%	
Sodium 10mg		2%		10%	
Total Sugars 2g		0%		0%	
Includes Added Sugars 0g		0%		0%	
Proteins 10g		20%		100%	
Calories per serving 210		Vitamin D 0%		Calcium 0%	
		Iron 0%		Potassium 0%	

10G TOTAL CARBS - 6G DIETARY FIBER - 0G SUGAR ALCOHOL = 4G NET CARBS

But the bulk of your meals will be plant and/or animal fats (more on that below), along with a moderate amount of protein, roughly

Get the bulk of your meals from plants and/or animal fats (more on that below), along with a moderate amount of protein, roughly 0.8-1.2 grams per pound of lean body mass. Use this [Keto calculator](#) to help find the ideal ratio of macronutrients you should consume on a daily basis based on your age, weight, activity level, and other factors.



## SIDE EFFECTS AND HOW TO MINIMIZE THEM

No matter the food plan, if you shift your diet, you're bound to feel some changes. When transitioning to Keto, there are two common side effects to look out for:

- **The "Keto Flu":** Fatigue, insomnia, nausea, headaches, constipation—these flu-like symptoms sometimes crop up two to seven days after starting a Keto diet. But to be clear, this isn't influenza. While researchers haven't been able to pinpoint exactly what causes [these symptoms](#), they see similar side effects in people who restrict inflammatory foods or begin an elimination diet. Keep in mind that most of these effects are short-term. Within a few weeks, most people get back to a normal (or better!) sleep routine, resolve any diarrhea or constipation, and resume their regular exercise with renewed, focused energy. The best way to fight the "Keto Flu"? Stay hydrated and continue eating healthy foods. Though research on Keto friendly [supplements](#) is sparse, incorporating more magnesium, salt, and electrolytes to fight this "flu" has been anecdotally successful. (Remember to stay away from most electrolyte drinks, which are typically loaded with sugar.)
- **Decreased physical performance:** When you begin a Keto regimen, fatigue and less-stellar-than-usual exercise performance can come with the territory, but those effects are short-lived. [Studies](#) have shown that over time, high fat diets like Keto can increase exercise performance. So although it may feel rough and frustrating at first, stick with it while your body adapts.

## WHAT TO EAT ON A KETO DIET

Your mantra is "high fat, moderate protein, low carb," but the rundown of Keto friendly foods hardly feels restrictive. In fact, [the list](#) is a long one. Here are just some of the optimal foods and ingredients for a Keto diet:

- Eggs
- Seafood
- Meat (beef, lamb, pork, chicken, turkey, etc)
- Tempeh, tofu, and seitan
- Dairy (cheese, butter, cream)
- Nuts and seeds (almonds, cashews, macadamias, walnuts, sunflower seeds, etc)
- Coconuts
- Avocados
- Leafy greens and low-carb vegetables, including spinach, kale, and bell peppers
- Low-carb fruits like berries
- Bone broth
- Oils (olive, coconut, avocado, etc)
- Alternative sweeteners (stevia, monk fruit, etc)

What should you avoid? Sugar (including honey, agave, and maple syrup), milk, pasta, bread, rice, corn, beans, and sugary drinks, to name a few. Most fruits—like bananas, apples, mangos, and oranges—are higher in Net Carbs, too, and should be avoided.



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## YOUR 5-DAY KETO MEAL PLAN

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER	SNACK
<b>DAY 1</b>	Eggs and avocado slices fried in butter or olive oil	Tuna salad on romaine leaves	Oven roasted chicken thighs with roasted brussel sprouts	Almond Vanilla Dang Bar
<b>DAY 2</b>	Chia seed pudding made with almond milk, topped with berries and almond butter	Chopped salad with leftover chicken thighs, goat cheese, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, and avocado	Tofu, bok choy, and cauliflower rice stir fry	Macadamia nuts
<b>DAY 3</b>	Soft boiled eggs seasoned with salt, pepper, and turmeric with half an avocado	Leftover tofu, bok choy, and cauliflower rice stir fry	Zucchini noodles with garlic, butter, parmesan, and shrimp	Lemon Matcha Dang Bar
<b>DAY 4</b>	High Fat, Low Carb yogurt (like Peak) with fresh berries and chopped nuts	Keto Cobb Salad with hard boiled eggs, crumbled bacon, avocado, tomatoes, and feta with bleu cheese dressing	Bunless grass fed beef or bison burgers with a side of roasted broccoli (served with butter or ghee)	Olives, cheese, and almonds
<b>DAY 5</b>	Spinach, mushroom,	Leftover burger	Salmon, asparagus,	Chocolate Sea Salt



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still feel hungry, drink water and snack on raw veggies, olives, avocados, hard boiled eggs, nuts, and seeds.

Here's some good news: [Alcohol](#) is perfectly Keto friendly in moderation. A 5-ounce glass of red or white wine has 3-4 grams of Net Carbs each, a 12-ounce light beer has just 3 grams, and even better, liquor (rum, vodka, gin, tequila, whiskey, etc.) has 0 grams of Net Carbs (mix it with seltzer or a zero-carb mixer for a Keto cocktail). The tipples you'll want to avoid? Sugary drinks like margaritas, pina colodas, Bloody Marys, and sangria, which packs a whopping 22 grams of Net Carbs in an 8-ounce cup.



## KETO SNACK IDEAS

Once you see how comprehensive a Keto plan can be, then you can start having some fun with nourishing snacks to keep you going between meals. String cheese, celery with almond butter, and of course [Dang Bars](#)—our plant based bars with 15 grams of fat and 4 grams of Net Carbs—can all fit into the Ketogenic lifestyle by helping you meet your daily protein, fat, and caloric needs.

## KETO FRIENDLY GROCERY SHOPPING

While it may take some planning to figure out what meals you like to cook and how much variety you need, your local grocery store should have almost all the items you need, including eggs, meat, seafood, vegetables, nuts, and oils. Some of the more gourmet ingredients like almond flour may require a trip to a specialty market or an online purchase.



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Beyond Dang Bars, there are other ready-to-eat Keto friendly foods you can find at the store, including [Kettle & Fire](#) soups and [Lily's](#) Fair Trade Certified, no-sugar chocolate (both of which come in vegan flavors as well).

## TIPS FOR DINING OUT

Cooking at home so you can monitor exactly what's going into your food is ideal—but not always practical. That said, just because you're on the go or have a dinner planned with friends doesn't mean you have to derail your diet. Here's how to successfully navigate eating out on a Keto diet:

- **Read the menu carefully:** Menus are filled with words like "breaded" and "glazed," which may sound fancy, but ultimately, they translate to more carbs, like in a breadcrumb coating or sugar-laden sauce. Opt for the most minimalist dishes, like salmon or an omelet and pass on the add-ons. For salads, look for low carb dressings like Caesar, bleu cheese, tahini, or olive oil and vinegar
- **Skip the bread:** Whether it's croutons on salads or bread baskets, restaurants are notorious for piling on the carbs, often before you've even ordered. Stay mindful of your Keto goals and focus on a nutrient-rich entree or a couple small plates.
- **Customize your dish:** Depending on the restaurant, it might be worth asking your waiter if you can edit your meal, whether that means skipping a dressing or asking for no bun with your burger and swapping the fries for a side salad.
- **Add a side:** Scan the "side dishes" section of the menu for Keto friendly foods to take on, like a side of avocado, roasted



- **Add a side:** Scan the "side dishes" section of the menu for keto friendly foods to tack on, like a side of avocado, seasonal vegetables, bacon, or deviled eggs.

- **Be careful:** Some non Keto friendly ingredients sneak up on you where you least expect them. Places like IHOP add pancake syrup to their omelets and Starbucks matcha powder is sweetened with sugar. Swapping milk for a plant based option at coffee shops can be risky too since they're probably using a sweetened almond milk. If you aren't sure, just ask.

Looking for hacks at your favorite restaurants? Here's a guide to Keto friendly options at chain eateries:

- **Starbucks:** Swap milk for heavy cream, order a black coffee, or opt for an unsweetened iced tea.
- **Chipotle:** Get a steak burrito bowl with lettuce, salsa, cheese, and sour cream—skip the rice and beans.
- **In-N-Out:** Go bun-less with a "Protein Style" cheeseburger with onion wrapped in lettuce. Go extra off menu and order a "Flying Dutchman": two beef patties sandwiched around two slices of cheese.
- **Jimmy John's:** The sandwich chain coined the term "Unwich" for this low carb option that packs all the fillings—like a BLT or tuna salad—with a lettuce wrap instead of bread.

## A PLANT-BASED APPROACH TO KETO



While some Keto devotees emphasize seafood, meat, and poultry, we've been passionate about creating plant based Keto snacks from day one. Whether you're vegetarian or vegan, or a meat lover looking for a lighter snack that isn't loaded with animal fat, dairy, or whey, we prioritize making the most delicious Keto snacks that align with this ethos, from our [Dang bars](#) to our Keto certified [Coconut Chips](#).

For more plant based Keto inspiration, check out Ruled.me's [vegan Keto guide](#) and [Ketotarian](#), a "(mostly) plant based" guide to Keto cooking by Dr. Will Cole.

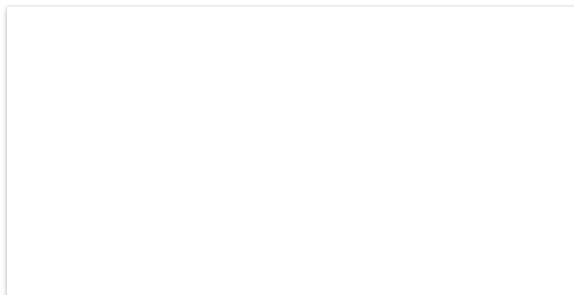


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