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Demystifying the Popular Keto Diet for Beginners

Celebrities like Halle Berry, Kourtney and Kim Kardashian, Megan Fox, and many others swear by the keto diet to get in shape and boost their fitness. The keto diet has been quite the rage for a long time. While we have all heard of it, not many know what exactly comprises a keto diet. If you are feeling like jumping on the bandwagon, this guide to a keto diet for beginners is just what you need.

What Is a Keto Diet?

The keto diet is a low-carb, high-fat diet that has a wide range of benefits that works great for weight management. This diet helps replace the carbohydrates in your meals with fat. Yes, fat. Sounds a little counterproductive, doesn't it? What with everyone asking you to reduce the amount of fat you consume, but here's the real kicker, it isn't.

The drastic decrease in the number of carbohydrates you consume puts your body in a state of 'ketosis' - that's where the diet gets its name from. The diet puts the amount of carbs you consume in a day to roughly 50gms (a bagel contains more).

Although the keto diet is comparatively new for reducing weight, it is being used for diabetes control and epilepsy from the 19th and 20th centuries. The Atkins diet, that can be called keto's predecessor for a low-card, weight loss diet popularized this diet.

To sum it, you decrease carbs, increase fats so your body is deprived of glucose.

What is Ketosis?

Your body turns the fats consumed into energy and ketones in the liver as a part of a biochemical process called ketosis. As a result of this, the body becomes very efficient in fat-burning. The ketones work as an alternative fuel to glucose for the body and are made overnight in the liver, generally as a result of dieting and fasting. These water-soluble lipid molecules are formed due to the drop in the glucose level of the blood, and replace sugar as fuel for the body cells to function. The glucose that the body has stored depletes in 3-4 days, resulting in the need for an alternative fuel to function.

The ketones thus produces are created by the liver from stored fat. This helps in fat reduction and ultimately brings about weight loss. Ketosis is brought about by the accumulation of ketones in the blood. It is important to note that for every individual, ketosis is brought about at a different rate.

The Benefits of Being on Keto

There are different types of keto diets, the most popular ones being the standard ketogenic diet (SKD), where the amounts of fats you consume makes up for 75% of your total diet, with 20% proteins and 5% carbs and high-protein ketogenic diet where you consume 60% fat, 35% protein, and 5% carbs. When you are on a keto diet for beginners, you must eat a lot of healthy fats and enough protein. But too much protein can hinder the process of ketosis, which is why it needs to be moderated.

What the keto diet does in a human body is because of the presence of ketones and its utilization as fuel for bodily processes.

Weight Loss

The diet not only induces ketosis (breaking of the fatty acid molecule in the liver as a result of eating fats) in your body but also makes you feel full. You no longer need to track calories. You can lose weight even without being calorie-conscious. And this is not all hocus-pocus. Several studies have been conducted where the power of a keto diet has been proved effective.

Low-carb diet is shown to be more effective in reducing hunger and food intake than high-carb diets. Another study conducted on healthy women only affirmed these results. People on a keto diet tend to lose 2.2-3 times more weight than those on other forms of diet. Those on a keto diet for beginners begin seeing the change in weight in the first few weeks.

A study found that the keto diet can be useful in the military too to control obesity among soldiers.

Helps Dealing with Diabetes

The keto diet facilitates for a drastic decrease in intake of sugar as sugar is 100% carbohydrate. This also leads to people eliminating processed foods from their diets. Type 2 diabetes is often caused as a result of excess fat in the body. Several studies have found that the diet helps those who are diabetic and prediabetic as there is a loss of fat. The diet also improves insulin sensitivity by about 75%.

Improvement in Overall Health

When you are not obese, the risk of several diseases becomes low. You also tend to consume more protein that boosts your health. The diet improves insulin sensitivity and can help you if you are diabetic. And that's not all. It can help with:

- HDL cholesterol
- Epilepsy

- Cancer
- Alzheimer's
- PCOS
- Acne
- Memory and more.

What to Eat and What Not To

Here are the foods you can freely indulge in to follow the perfect keto diet for beginners:

1. Unprocessed cheese.
2. Vegetables that are low on carbs like tomatoes, onions, all green veggies, and more.
3. Eggs.
4. Butter.
5. Cream.
6. Nuts and seeds.
7. Avocados.
8. Berries.
9. Dark chocolate (90% or more).
10. Olives.
11. Full-fat yogurt.
12. Fish with fats like salmon, mackerel.
13. Chicken, turkey, sausages, steaks, ham, and other red meat.

These are the foods you'll have to say goodbye to:

1. Most sugary desserts like ice creams.
2. Grains, especially wheat and rice.
3. Pasta.
4. Fruits except for berries.
5. Beans.
6. Vegetables that grow below the ground like carrots, potatoes, and more.
7. Alcohol.
8. Diet foods and low-fat foods.

How to Know If You Are Doing It Right?

When the keto diet is followed correctly, there are a few signs your body will show to tell you you are doing it right. It is always advised to consult a dietitian and not do it yourself. These signs are helpful to know more about the keto diet for beginners.

- Bad breath (chew some sugar-free gum).
- A drop in weight.
- A fruity smell in urine (nothing to worry).
- A decrease in hunger.
- After an initial energy drop, better focus, and higher energy levels.
- A rise in blood ketone levels.
- Reduction in insulin.
- Initial constipation or diarrhoea (this is only temporary).
- Insomnia (this goes away in a matter of weeks).

Helpful Tips to Bring About Ketosis

The keto diet for beginners is not easy. These simple tips can help you put your body in a state of ketosis:

- Eat foods cooked in coconut oil.
- Increase physical activity.
- Gradually decrease the carbs in your diet.
- Eat more healthy fats.
- You can try intermittent fasting for a short period of time.
- Eat protein-rich foods.

Quick Questions

The keto diet changes the number of minerals and nutrients your body gets. These tips can help in maintaining the balance, especially as a part of the keto diet for beginners.

Q. Are there any side effects?

You can experience some side effects while you are on a keto diet. These side effects are given a name called 'keto flu.' You may experience an energy drop, increased appetite, difficulty sleeping, nausea, and confusion. To deal with this, take it slow. Gradually begin decreasing the carbohydrates in your body, instead of giving your body a shock. This will help in minimizing the side effects.

There are other side effects to including brain fog, skin inflammation irritability, constipation, headaches, possible nutrient deficiencies etc. Some long-term side effects include osteoporosis, kidney stones, high level of uric acid among others. It is advisable to be constantly monitored by a dietitian while on a keto diet.

Q. Do you need to take any supplements?

To maintain the water-mineral balance in your body, you can take supplements for sodium, potassium, and magnesium. You can also take MCT oil, exogenous ketones, caffeine, and whey protein. Adding more salt in your diet when starting out will also aid in keeping this balance.

The most important type of supplement is exogenous ketones. These ketones are made from ketone salts that are naturally derived. There are several options available in the market. However, these might not be great for people on a long-term keto diet. MCT oil is known to be a better option.

Q. Is there any kind of muscle loss?

If you ensure that the amount of protein you are taking is optimum, and if you are taking the right supplements, you can manage the muscle loss. It might be difficult to build muscle in keto diet as you are eliminating a lot of carbs, this is only in the first few weeks after which your body gets used to the change, and you can exercise like you used to.

A study that had well-trained cyclists on a keto diet for for weeks revealed that chronic ketosis doesn't reduce exercise performance or affect endurance in anyway.

Q. Does it mean bidding adieu to carbs forever?

You can eat carbs after the first three months, but only once in a blue moon. To ensure that the benefits of the keto diet are consistent, be true to it.

Q. Is it dangerous?

The keto diet is completely safe. It is not dangerous and is completely different from ketoacidosis that happens during diabetes. Constant monitoring is a must.

Final Word

We hope this guide on the keto diet for beginners was helpful. Before you begin the diet, be clear about your goals. If you are an athlete or someone who is looking to build muscle mass, the diet might not be right for you. It is a great pick if you are overweight or obese, diabetic, or someone with low metabolic health. Good luck with keto!