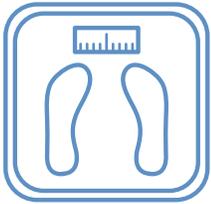


IS THE KETOGENIC DIET SAFE?

Debunking common myths about ketogenic diets

Low-carbohydrate high-fat diets are rising in popularity and the science behind the ketogenic diet grows stronger every day. However, there is still a lot of unnecessary fear about this way of eating because it is so different from the dietary patterns we used to think were healthiest for us.



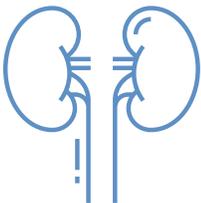
Doesn't eating fat make you fat?

High insulin levels tell the body to store fat; low insulin levels tell the body to burn fat. Carbohydrates can spike insulin to very high levels, but fat barely raises insulin at all. Low-carbohydrate diets lower insulin levels, switching the body into fat-burning mode.



Doesn't cholesterol cause heart disease?

The USDA now reassures us that "cholesterol is not a nutrient of concern for overconsumption" because there is no relationship between how much cholesterol we eat and how high our blood cholesterol levels are. High blood sugar and insulin levels appear to be the major culprits in heart disease.



Do low-carbohydrate diets damage the kidneys?

Low-carbohydrate diets don't need to be high in protein, but healthy kidneys can process large quantities of protein. What damages kidneys over time are high blood pressure and high blood sugar (diabetes). Low-carbohydrate diets naturally lower blood pressure and blood sugar, protecting kidneys from damage.



Doesn't saturated fat clog arteries?

All whole plant and animal foods naturally contain a mixture of saturated and unsaturated fat, so we have been safely eating saturated fat throughout our evolutionary history. Multiple high-quality scientific studies have found replacing saturated fat with unsaturated fat does not reduce risk for heart disease.



Doesn't the brain need sugar?

Yes, the brain requires a small amount of sugar (glucose) at all times, but this does not mean we need to eat carbohydrates. Our bodies can smoothly and reliably manufacture glucose out of fat and protein through a process called "gluconeogenesis" (making glucose from scratch).

CAN THE KETOGENIC DIET HELP?

The ketogenic diet boosts brain metabolism, reduces inflammation and oxidative stress in the brain, and helps balance brain chemistry. It is worth trying for a wide variety of psychiatric conditions, because it improves overall brain health.

Psychosis (Schizoaffective Disorder)*

An 82-year-old woman who had suffered since childhood with paranoid and suicidal thoughts, and daily auditory and visual hallucinations that had not responded to numerous medications started a simple low-carbohydrate diet in 2008. Her symptoms began improving within two weeks. She stopped all her medications and remains free of psychotic symptoms and suicidal ideation in 2020. She also lost 150 pounds.

Panic Disorder

A 31-year-old graduate student with frequent panic attacks, irritability, constant food cravings, "emotional eating," and sleepiness occurring two hours after meals did not want to take anxiety medication. So she started a whole foods low-carbohydrate diet instead, and later reported:

"I don't know how I dealt with it because they all used to bother me A LOT, but I would say that the symptoms are 90% gone."

Early Alzheimer's Disease

An 80-year-old overweight, retired attorney with early Alzheimer's disease, sugar addiction, and anxiety started a whole foods ketogenic diet hoping for better mental clarity. After a year of following the diet most of the time, he has reached his ideal weight. He and his family find his mind is much sharper and his mood is much better when he is in ketosis. Whenever he "falls off the wagon" and eats sugar, he feels depressed, anxious and confused.

Bipolar Depression

A 40-year-old overweight musician with bipolar depression and years of suicidal thinking despite taking mood stabilizers and antidepressants found that after four weeks on a ketogenic diet, his life felt worth living again. Even though none of the problems in his life had gone away, they didn't bother him as much and he had the emotional energy to work on them to make things better. He also lost more than 20 pounds.

ADHD

A 44-year-old architect with lifelong ADHD found Adderall helped with productivity at work and at home, but the medicine caused peaks and crashes in her attention and energy levels and caused bothersome side effects. She tried a ketogenic diet and found that when her blood ketones were at least

1.2 mM, she didn't need to take Adderall and functioned even better than on medication.

Bulimia

A 26-year-old woman with bipolar 2 disorder who had struggled with bulimia and frequent migraines for many years adopted an LCHF diet and experienced complete resolution of binge-purge behaviors, migraines, and premenstrual distress. In addition, her "highs" shifted from angry to happy and her "lows" became less intense. We managed the leftover depression symptoms with a low dose of lamotrigine (a mood-stabilizing antidepressant) and psychotherapy.

**This story comes from Dr. Eric Westman's published case report. All other stories are from Dr. Georgia Ede's private practice.*