

A Guide to Writing for Human Service Professionals

Make eating keto a lot easier with this comprehensive keto diet food list—plus learn if it's the right diet for you.

Complete Keto Diet Food List: What You Can and Cannot Eat If You're on a Ketogenic Diet

The ketogenic diet is a high-fat, moderate-protein and very-low-carbohydrate diet. Carbohydrates are the body's preferred source of energy, but on a strict ketogenic diet, less than 5% of energy intake is from carbohydrates (learn more in our beginner's guide for the ketogenic diet). The reduction of carbohydrates puts the body into a metabolic state called ketosis. Ketosis is when the body starts breaking down stored fat into molecules called ketone bodies to use for energy, in the absence of circulating blood sugar from food. Once the body reaches ketosis, most cells will use ketone bodies to generate energy until you start eating carbohydrates again.

Traditionally, the ketogenic diet was only used in clinical settings to reduce seizures in children with epilepsy. "Now there is a lot of interest in the diet's effectiveness in helping with other neurological conditions, cancer, diabetes, PCOS [polycystic ovary syndrome], obesity, high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease," says Emily Stone, M.S., RD. People also eat keto to lose weight (here's what happened when one writer tried going keto for 30 days).

Even if you know that you need to eat a very-low-carb, high-fat, moderate-protein diet, it can be confusing to know which foods to eat. Here's our guide to foods you can eat, foods you should avoid and foods you can sometimes have when you're following a ketogenic diet.

Foods You Can Eat on the Ketogenic Diet

a printable list of various foods that are Keto Diet Friendly

Here is a list of all the low-carb, keto-friendly foods that are appropriate to eat when you're following keto.

Fish and seafood

Low-carb veggies

Cheese

Avocados

Poultry

Eggs

Nuts, seeds and healthful oils

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Plain Greek yogurt and cottage cheese

Berries

Unsweetened coffee and tea

Dark chocolate and cocoa powder

Fish and Seafood

Fish is rich in B vitamins, potassium and selenium; it's also protein-rich and carb-free. Salmon, sardines, mackerel, albacore tuna and other fatty fish boast high levels of omega-3 fats, which have been found to lower blood sugar levels and increase insulin sensitivity. Frequent fish intake has been linked to a decreased risk of chronic disease as well as improved mental health. Aim to consume at least two 3-ounce servings of fatty fish weekly.

Low-Carb Veggies

Nonstarchy vegetables are low in calories and carbs, but high in many nutrients, including vitamin C and several minerals. They also contain antioxidants that help protect against cell-damaging free radicals. Aim for nonstarchy vegetables with less than 8 grams of net carbs per cup. Net carbs are total carbohydrates minus fiber. Broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, bell peppers, zucchini and spinach fit the bill.

Cheese

Cheese has zero carbohydrates and is high in fat, making it a great fit for the ketogenic diet. It's also rich in protein and calcium. But, a 1-ounce slice of cheese delivers about 30% of the Daily Value for saturated fat, so if you're worried about heart disease, consider portion size when noshing on cheese.

Read more: [5 Reasons Cheese Is Actually Good for Your Health](#)

Plain Greek Yogurt and Cottage Cheese

Yogurt and cottage cheese are high in protein and calcium-rich. Five ounces of plain Greek yogurt provides just 5 grams of carbohydrates and 12 grams of protein. The same amount of cottage cheese also has 5 grams of carbohydrates with 18 grams of protein. Studies have shown that both calcium and protein can reduce appetite and promote fullness. Higher-fat yogurts and cottage cheese help keep you full for longer, and full-fat products would be part of the ketogenic diet.

Avocados

Choose heart-healthy fats like avocados, which are high in monounsaturated fat and potassium, a mineral many Americans are lacking. Half of a medium avocado contains 9 grams of total carbohydrates, 7 grams of which are fiber. Swapping animal fats for plant fats like avocados can help improve cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

Meat and Poultry

Meat is a source of lean protein and is considered a staple on the ketogenic diet. Fresh meat and poultry contain no carbohydrates and are rich in B vitamins and several minerals, including potassium, selenium and zinc. While processed meats, like bacon and sausage, are allowed on keto, they aren't the best for your heart and may raise your risk of certain types of cancer if you eat too much. Choose chicken, fish and beef more often and limit processed meats.

Eggs

Eggs are high in protein, B vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Two eggs contain zero carbohydrates and 12 grams of protein. Eggs have been shown to trigger hormones that increase feelings of fullness and keep blood sugar levels stable, and they also contain antioxidants such as lutein and zeaxanthin, which help protect eye health.

Nuts, Seeds and Healthy Oils

Nuts and seeds are full of healthy polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, fiber and protein. They also are very low in net carbs. Olive oil and coconut oil are the two oils recommended on the keto diet. Olive oil is high in oleic acid and is associated with a lower risk of heart disease. Coconut oil is high in saturated fat but contains medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs), which can increase ketone production. MCTs may increase metabolic rate and promote the loss of

weight and belly fat too. Measure portion sizes when consuming any type of healthy fat.

Carb counts for 1 oz. (28 g) of nuts and seeds (net carbohydrate equals total carbs minus fiber):

Almonds: 3 g net carbs (6 g total carbs)

3 g net carbs (6 g total carbs) Brazil nuts: 1 g net carbs (3 g total carbs)

1 g net carbs (3 g total carbs) Cashews: 8 g net carbs (9 g total carbs)

8 g net carbs (9 g total carbs) Macadamia nuts: 2 g net carbs (4 g total carbs)

2 g net carbs (4 g total carbs) Pecans: 1 g net carbs (4 g total carbs)

1 g net carbs (4 g total carbs) Pistachios: 5 g net carbs (8 g total carbs)

5 g net carbs (8 g total carbs) Walnuts: 2 g net carbs (4 g total carbs)

2 g net carbs (4 g total carbs) Chia seeds: 2 g net carbs (12 g total carbs)

2 g net carbs (12 g total carbs) Flaxseeds: 0 g net carbs (8 g total carbs)

0 g net carbs (8 g total carbs) Pumpkin seeds: 2 g net carbs (4 g total carbs)

2 g net carbs (4 g total carbs) Sesame seeds: 4 g net carbs (7 g total carbs)

Berries

Berries are rich in antioxidants that reduce inflammation and protect against disease. They are low in carbs and high in fiber.

Carb counts for 1/2 cup of some berries:

Blackberries: 3 g net carbs (7 g total carbs)

3 g net carbs (7 g total carbs) Blueberries: 9 g net carbs (11 g total carbs)

9 g net carbs (11 g total carbs) Raspberries: 3 g net carbs (7 g total carbs)

3 g net carbs (7 g total carbs) Strawberries: 3 g net carbs (6 g total carbs)

Unsweetened Coffee and Tea

Plain coffee and tea contain zero grams of carbohydrates, fat or protein, so they are A-OK on the keto diet. Studies show coffee lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Tea is rich in antioxidants and has less caffeine than coffee; drinking tea may reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke, help with weight loss and boost your immune system.

Dark Chocolate and Cocoa Powder

Check the label on these, as the amount of carbs depends on the type and how much you consume. Cocoa has been called a "superfruit" because it is rich in antioxidants, and dark chocolate contains flavanols, which may reduce the risk of heart disease by lowering blood pressure and keeping arteries healthy.

List of Foods You Can't Eat on the Keto Diet:

Grains

Starchy vegetables and high-sugar fruits

Sweetened yogurt

Juices

Honey, syrup or sugar in any form

Chips and crackers

Baked goods including gluten-free baked goods

Don't get too discouraged. Dietitians Stone and Laura Dority, M.S., RD, LD, with Keto Knowledge LLC, say that no foods are really off-limits on the keto diet. It's about total carbohydrate intake and how you choose to "spend" your carbs. Generally, you should stay under 20 to 40 grams of carbohydrates per day. "The exact amount needed to achieve ketosis can vary on the individual, though, with carb prescriptions ranging from 10 to 60 grams per day. This total is for net carbohydrates (total carbs minus fiber)," says Stone.

Dority adds, "Individuals who are really active can eat more carbs (maybe more at the 40-gram level) than someone who is sedentary."

High-Carb Foods That Most People Avoid on the Keto Diet

Grains

Cereal, crackers, rice, pasta, bread and beer are high in carbohydrates. Even whole-wheat pasta and the new bean-based pastas are high in carbs. Consider alternatives like spiralized vegetables or shirataki noodles, which are healthier low-carb options. Sugary breakfast cereals and healthy whole-grain cereals are high in carbohydrates too and should be avoided or minimized. "A slice of bread is 11 grams of carbs on average so technically you could have one slice a day maybe, but that's spending all your carbs on pretty poor nutrition so I wouldn't recommend it when for the same carbs you could have A LOT of veggies," says Dority.

Beer can be enjoyed in moderation on a low-carb diet. Dry wine and spirits are better options but all alcohol should be very limited.

Starchy vegetables and high-sugar fruits

Starchy vegetables contain more digestible carbohydrates than fiber and should be limited on the ketogenic diet. These include corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes and beets. Limit high-sugar fruits too, which spike your blood sugar more quickly than berries and have more carbohydrates (get a full list of low-carb fruits ranked from lowest to highest).

Carb counts for high-sugar fruits:

Banana (1 medium): 24 g net carbs (27 g total carbs)

(1 medium): 24 g net carbs (27 g total carbs) Raisins (1 oz. / 28 g): 21 g net carbs, 22 g total carbs)

(1 oz. / 28 g): 21 g net carbs, 22 g total carbs) Dates (2 large): 32 g net carbs (36 g total carbs)

(2 large): 32 g net carbs (36 g total carbs) Mango (1 cup, sliced): 22 g net carbs (25 g total carbs)

(1 cup, sliced): 22 g net carbs (25 g total carbs) Pear (1 medium): 21 g net carbs (27 g total carbs)

Carb counts for starchy vegetables:

Corn (1 cup): 32 g net carbs (36 g total carbs)

(1 cup): 32 g net carbs (36 g total carbs) Potato (1 medium): 33 g net carbs (37 g total carbs)

(1 medium): 33 g net carbs (37 g total carbs) Sweet potato (1 medium): 20 g net carbs (24 g total carbs)

(1 medium): 20 g net carbs (24 g total carbs) Beets (1 cup, cooked): 14 g net carbs (17 g total carbs)

Sweetened yogurts

Stick to plain yogurt to limit added sugars (aka carbohydrates). Greek yogurt is higher in protein and lower in

carbohydrates compared to regular yogurt.

Juices

Fruit juice—“natural or not”—is high in fast-digesting carbs that spike your blood sugar. Stick to water.

Honey, syrup and sugar in any form

Avoid sugar, honey, maple syrup and other forms of sugar, which are high in carbohydrates and low in nutrients.

Chips and crackers

Avoid chips, crackers and other processed, grain-based snack foods, which are high in carbohydrates and low in fiber.

Gluten-free baked goods

Gluten-free does not equal carb-free. In fact, many gluten-free breads and muffins are as high in carbohydrates as traditional baked goods. They usually lack fiber too.

Foods and Drinks You Can Sometimes Have on the Keto Diet

You can technically have any food on the keto diet if it falls within your daily carbohydrate goal, but these foods fall in the middle between high-carb and low-carb.

Homemade Almond Milk

Pictured Recipe: Homemade Almond Milk

Milk

Milk is an excellent source of calcium, potassium and several B vitamins. But, 1 cup has 12 grams of sugar (lactose).

Choose almond, coconut or another low-carb milk instead.

Beans and Legumes

Beans and legumes are high in fiber and protein and are part of a heart-healthy diet but are also high in carbohydrates. They may be included in small amounts on a ketogenic diet. However, it's often recommended to avoid them altogether.

Pros of the Ketogenic Diet

"There is solid evidence to support use of the ketogenic diet in individuals with epilepsy who have seizures that are drug resistant," says Dority. In the short term, people who follow the diet report weight loss. Dority says, "There is some recent research showing promise in disorders such as autism, traumatic brain injury, brain tumors, migraines and Alzheimer's, as well as some research on ketogenic diets and type 2 diabetes including reducing insulin needs, fasting blood sugar levels, lowering A1C and obtaining significant weight loss." But much more research needs to be done to substantiate these claims, and any benefits would only impact those who are successfully able to follow the restrictive diet.

Cons of the Ketogenic Diet

"Like most highly restrictive diets, it is difficult to meet nutritional needs while doing keto," says Stone. "It often comes with uncomfortable side effects like constipation and the 'keto flu.' Also, the long-term health consequences are not well understood." Highly restrictive diets are notoriously hard to follow, and can impact dieter's relationship with food in a potentially negative way. Learn more about the several negative side effects of the keto diet, ranging from bad breath to hair loss and damaged gut health.

The Bottom Line

It's not a one-size-fits-all prescription, and it's crucial to work with a dietitian to ensure you're getting essential nutrients while maintaining ketosis. There's some research on the potential benefits of the ketogenic diet for many conditions, but it is very challenging for most people to keep it up for the long haul. Plus, the long-term

effects on overall health are poorly understood and need more research. Not to mention, we at EatingWell don't believe in being so restrictive and avoiding nutritious foods like whole grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables. If you decide to go keto, work with a dietitian to help you create a plan.

Reference

[Quasi-Experimentation: A Guide to Design and Analysis \(Methodology in the Social Sciences\)](#)

[Conducting Health Research: Principles, Process, and Methods](#)