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I'm Standing Up For the Keto Diet: Here's Why

By now we've all heard of the **keto diet**, and maybe even have tried it ourselves or know someone that has. The results are a mixed bag: you LOVE it, or you LOATHE it. In either case, you spend a large amount of time either supporting or protesting it.

So what gives? Why are some celebrities touting the amazing benefits, and others like **Jillian Michaels**, suggesting to steer clear? I'm here to give you details on why it may not work for everyone and how to know if it can be right for you before you start.

The History of the Keto Diet

Keto may seem like a hot new trend happening for weight loss, but it has been used since the 1920's to control seizures in epilepsy patients and has proved to be extremely successful, especially in children. In short, when you are not providing your body with fast burning carbohydrates (which are converted to glucose) for energy, the body learns to access both dietary and stored body fat, instead, for energy – which is especially supportive to your brain.

The keto diet focuses on lowering carbohydrates to 30g or less net carbs per day (it's different for everyone) so that your liver creates ketones from fat that can be used by your body as a source of energy. This also means that you need to balance out the lack of carbs with higher fat and moderate amounts of protein to fuel the body. Not to fear, fat is back in and not proven to be the health risk it once was, in fact it's an essential part of a healthy diet.

Five Myths About the Keto Diet:

1. Fat makes you fat and causes heart disease

Any nutrient that you're eating can cause you to gain weight if you are over-eating it. A high-fat diet is more satiating and actually helps you to avoid over-eating, in comparison to a low fat high carb diet. Our bodies are efficient machines and break down fat just like anything else we eat. Fat was vilified decades ago because of research that was done on man-made trans fats, which are the most unhealthy type of fat. Saturated fat was lumped in with these even though they are completely different and research has proven that there is no evidence connecting the consumption of saturated fat (comes from animals, meat, coconut oil, etc) and heart disease. More research is showing that it's our overconsumption of refined carbohydrates and excess sugar that contributes to heart disease as well as unhealthy cholesterol levels.

2. Keto eliminates carbs and other essential food groups

Jillian's argument is that keto eliminates essential food groups: carbohydrates, fruit, whole grains and legumes that have vital nutrients. First off, you don't eliminate carbs entirely, you lessen them to around 30g net carbs a day. Second, there is nothing in fruit, whole grains and legumes that you can't get from a diet of varied types of non starchy vegetables, some starchy vegetables, low carb fruit, healthy fats and animal protein.

3. All you eat is meat, fat bombs, butter coffee, and cheese

This is the biggest issue that I see with the keto diet. People think that all you eat is tons of meat and fat. While that is quite essential to the keto diet, you must fill your plate with lots of non-starchy vegetables, leafy greens and high fiber vegetables. Without those, you are missing out on a lot of essential vitamins and minerals. Vegetables should make up every meal with at least 1-2 cups at each. It is also a common misconception that you can't do keto without eating a ton of dairy. It is entirely possible to do it without dairy and loads of cheese. There are plenty of other healthy fat sources: nuts, seeds, avocado fruit and oils, olives, coconut products, nut butters, etc.

4. It can't be sustained long term

Contrary to popular belief keto can be sustained long term, if you choose to do it. But you have to do it correctly, as I mentioned with education around proper nutrition. Many people find that they thrive on a keto diet and choose to do it long term as is, or with modifications. Once the body learns to produce ketones and is able to easily access fat for energy it is easy for it to go in and out of using ketones, fat or carbs as energy sources. People may choose to do cyclical keto while adding days or periods where they eat higher carb and then go back to keto. It can be used as a nutritional reset, to help with sleep, energy levels and weight loss.

5. Keto is the only way to burn fat

As I mentioned above, your body can learn to burn fat for fuel without being in a state of ketosis. By lessening your dependence on carbohydrates, the body is able to switch back and forth. The primary goal should be to teach your body to become a fat burner, by lessening your consumption of refined and processed carbohydrates. Any diet that you take on, you should lessen your consumption of refined carbohydrates and sugar. This will give your body the ability to function more optimally and you will reap the benefits of fat burning, like more stable energy, blood sugar, better sleep, weight loss, etc without having to go to a low carb level like keto.

The keto diet is not for everyone, but no diet is. There is no one-size-fits all approach to nutrition because we all have different genetics and lifestyles. While the keto diet can work to improve or manage type 2 diabetes and epilepsy if you have a diagnosed medical condition or are on medication you must consult a medical professional knowledgeable about keto before starting.

The Keto Diet is Great for:

- Those looking to improve hormone balance
- Insulin resistance
- Obesity
- Inflammatory issues (keto removes/limits many foods known to be inflammatory: sugar, refined carbs, grains, legumes, etc)
- General fatigue
- Fat loss
- People who want to optimize nutrition and their health

The Keto Diet is not Recommended for:

- Children under the age of 18 (unless monitored by a professional)
- The elderly
- People who have trouble maintaining a healthy weight
- Anyone with a history of disordered eating
- People with diagnosed hypoglycemia
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women (who weren't already eating keto)
- Anyone struggling with adrenal fatigue

The Bottom Line

The biggest advice that I can provide is that you need to do your research from reputable source about ANY diet before beginning. If you are not sure where you look, find a professional who is knowledgeable about nutrition before beginning to help you. If you are trying it on your own, you are likely to experience the keto flu for a period of a few weeks: feeling low energy, headaches, muscle cramps, etc. These symptoms should subside within a few weeks, but if they do not it may not be working for you.

The biggest issue I see is misinformation and people who create their own version of the "keto diet" with little to no nutrition education. Eating just an avocado at every meal for a week is NOT the keto diet. Unfortunately, that is the state of the internet and you can't trust everything that you read.

My favorite Keto professionals are Diane Sanfillippo, Robb Wolf, Mark Sisson, Jimmy Moore and Dr. Josh Axe. They all have incredible resources, and a lot for free that can provide you with necessary information to do the keto diet in a healthy way.

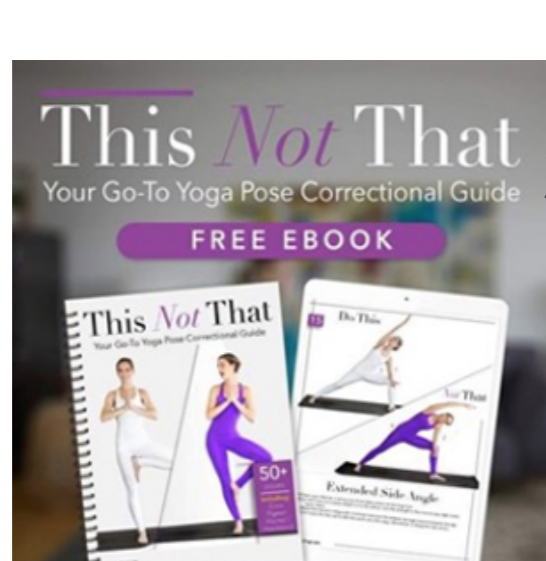
Also, try to remember that people will always have their preferential way of dieting and losing weight and just because it didn't work for them, doesn't mean it won't work great for you. I recommend always trying it out if you are curious and tweaking things and learning how your body optimally functions. After all, no one knows how we're feeling better than we do.

Resources:

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20071648>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1325029/>
- <https://draxe.com/keto-diet-myths/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2716748/>
- <https://nutritionandmetabolism.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1743-7075-1-2#Sec2>
- <https://www.wellandgood.com/good-food/keto-diet-benefits-trends/>
- <https://draxe.com/keto-diet-myths/>

Keto Quick Start by Diane Sanfillippo

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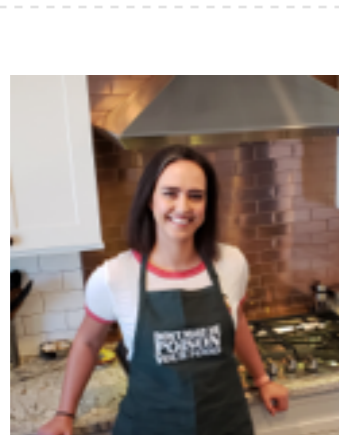
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Bernie Jensen

I'm Bernie, a Nutritional Therapy Practitioner obsessed with cooking, eating and talking about fresh, real food. My passion is to empower you to re-balance your life through food & lifestyle choices to find vitality, freedom and feel great health.

I believe in finding a sustainable approach to eating healthy while still enjoying your favorite foods and discovering what's best for YOU - think like a bad yogi nutritionist would! I love yoga, cooking, recipe development, writing, chocolate and red wine. I live in Colorado with my husband, two cats and enjoy summertime, leggings as pants and noderding out on nutrition. Follow me on Instagram @freshorbust or head to my website freshorbust.com for recipes, nutrition and lifestyle tips.

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