

We've all heard of the Atkins and Banting diets, but the word on everyone's lips these days has been 'Keto'. So we had to ask: What is all the fuss about?

By LAUREN ENDRODY

The Keto Craze

QUICK KETO FACTS

The Keto Diet, in short: A low-carb, high-fat way of eating that encourages your body to use fat for energy instead of glucose (from carbs). Glucose is the body's primary energy source, so your system will always use it first, storing fat molecules for later.

A State of Ketosis is how your body reacts when your food intake is too low to survive. When you haven't eaten enough food, your body breaks down the fat stored in the liver (called ketones). The keto diet forces this process because of the lack of carbs (and easy-to-process glucose).

What On Earth is 'Keto Flu'? Symptoms include frequent urination, body cramps, constipation or diarrhoea and heart palpitations. Remember, eating lots of fat puts you at risk for high cholesterol, gallstones and indigestion.

IT SEEMS THAT EVERY

other week there's a new diet on the market, but you might be surprised to hear that the keto diet actually isn't new at all. It's been around for almost a century. We – the general public – just hadn't known about it until the world (and the Kardashians) cottoned on to the fact that if you follow the keto eating plan, you can drop the kilos. Naturally, it has been trending ever since.

The diet was originally developed in 1924 by Dr Russell Wilder at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota to treat patients who had epilepsy. It was discovered that people with epilepsy suffered from fewer seizures when they fasted. So, Wilder and his colleagues found a way to convince the body that it was starving, without it actually being necessary for them to starve their patients.

They called it the 'ketogenic diet' and it turned out to be so successful that, for a long time, it was the main form of treatment for many people with epilepsy, especially children. There's even a 1997 Meryl Streep movie...*First Do No Harm*, about a woman who turns to the keto diet in a desperate attempt to treat her son's severe epilepsy.

Why Weight Loss?

So, how does tricking your body into thinking that it is starving lead to weight loss? Starvation causes our bodies to go into survival mode and tap into our fat reserves to produce the necessary energy for us to keep going – this is the main premise on which the keto diet capitalises.

Normally, we get our energy from the carbohydrates we eat, which are converted into glucose, the body's go-to molecules for producing energy. But when the carb intake is limited, our bodies start to break down fat in our liver in order to produce ketones, which become the substitute for glucose as a source of energy. Once this happens, our body enters a state called 'ketosis'.

If you're starting to think that it sounds a lot like another low-carb, high-fat diet, you're not wrong. That's exactly what it is. But what sets it apart is that it is not only more restrictive with carb intake, but also with protein intake – and that's because eating too much protein can interfere

with ketosis, says registered dietitian Cat Taylor. 'I see a lot of people assuming that the keto diet includes all of the fat and protein you want, but in actuality, even your protein intake has to be monitored, because the body can break down protein and turn it into carbohydrates,' she says. 'Fats are the only nutrient that the body cannot turn into carbohydrates for fuel.'

So fat plays the leading role in the keto diet. To give you a clear picture of what this means, the keto diet is broken down as follows: 75% fat, 20% protein and a meagre 5% carb intake.

Is It A Long-Term Diet?

In terms of losing weight quickly, the keto diet certainly has proven its worth. 'It will cause you to lose weight within the first week,' says registered dietitian Stacey Mattinson. Overall, this type of diet has shown better results than your usual low-fat diets. However, there are still many doubts about the keto diet's long-term effectiveness, mainly due to how difficult it is for people to maintain such a highly restrictive eating plan.

And, as Stacey says, 'A diet that eliminates entire food groups is a red flag to me. This isn't something to take lightly or dive into head first with no medical supervision.'

Nevertheless, when taken with a pinch of salt (literally and figuratively), this diet could be beneficial for those who are diabetic, overweight and looking to get the ball rolling in terms of weight loss, or just looking to improve their metabolic health in general.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A KETO-EATER

Breakfast: Scrambled eggs in butter on a bed of lettuce, topped with avocado

Snack: Sunflower seeds

Lunch: Spinach salad with grilled salmon or Caesar salad with chicken

Snack: Celery and greens or red pepper strips dipped in guacamole

Dinner: Pork chops with cauliflower mash and red cabbage slaw or meatballs served with zucchini noodles and Parmesan

FAT FIRST

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TURN OVER for the Yay and Nay food list...

The Keto Food Pyramid

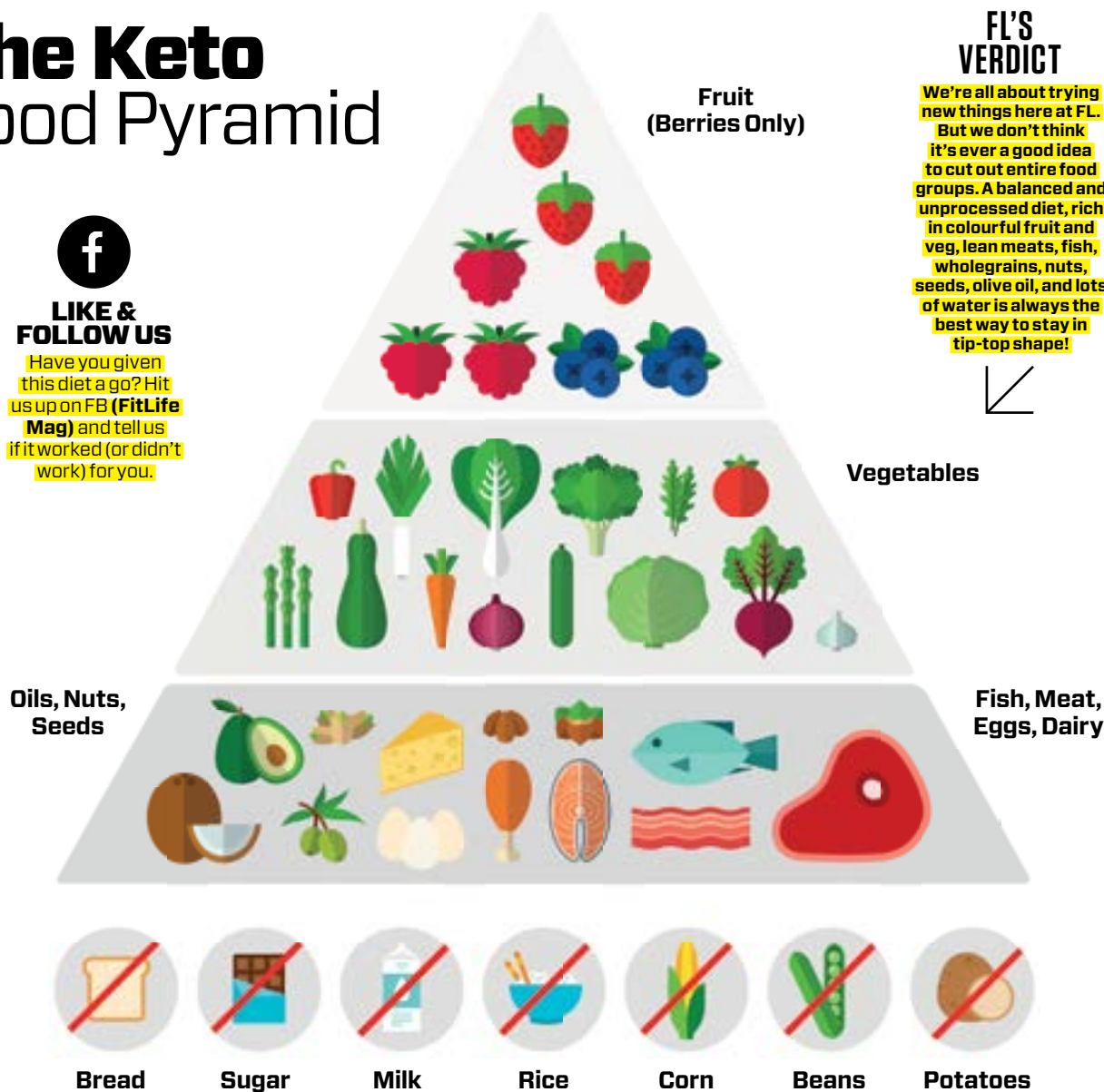


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Have you given this diet a go? Hit us up on FB (**FitLife Mag**) and tell us if it worked (or didn't work) for you.

FL'S VERDICT

We're all about trying new things here at FL. But we don't think it's ever a good idea to cut out entire food groups. A balanced and unprocessed diet, rich in colourful fruit and veg, lean meats, fish, wholegrains, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and lots of water is always the best way to stay in tip-top shape!



WHAT YOU CAN EAT

- **Meat:** Red meat, steak, ham, sausage, bacon and chicken
- **Fatty fish:** Salmon, trout, tuna and mackerel
- **Eggs**
- **Avocados**
- **Butter and cream**
- **Cheese:** Cheddar, blue and mozzarella
- **Nuts and seeds:** Almonds, walnuts, flax-, pumpkin- and chia seeds
- **Healthy oils:** Coconut, avocado and extra-virgin olive oil
- **Low-carb veg:** Green veg, tomatoes, onions and peppers

WHAT YOU CAN'T EAT

- **Grains or starches:** Bread, pasta, rice, cereal and other grain-based products
- **Sugary foods:** Cooledrinks, fruit juice, cake, ice cream and sweets
- **Milk**
- **Beans or legumes:** Peas, lentils, kidney beans and chickpeas
- **Root vegetables and tubers:** Potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots and corn
- **Alcohol:** Many alcoholic drinks are high in carbs