

# Before You Start Keto or Carnivore

A complete, doctor-to-patient playbook for running keto or carnivore as a targeted metabolic reset, start to finish.

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Keto and carnivore work. That's not the question. The question is what you're using them for, and for how long.

I don't think either one is a good way to eat for the rest of your life. I do use both in the clinic, on purpose, for a defined stretch. Six to twelve months, usually, to break insulin resistance, get type 2 diabetes under control, or move a weight-loss plateau that won't budge. Then we transition you back to a whole-food way of eating you can keep up for good.

Think of these as a tool, not a destination. A reset. Used that way, they do real work on your blood sugar, your weight, and how you feel.

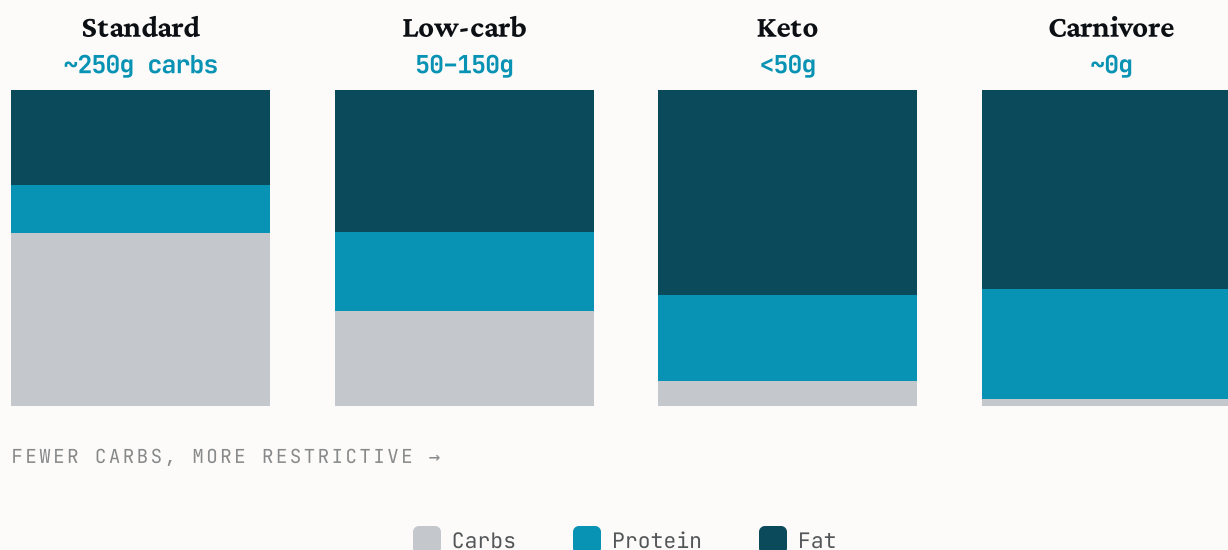
This guide is your full introduction to keto and carnivore. It has everything you need to get started and run the whole thing: what they are, why they work on a stubborn metabolism, how to track your food and confirm you're actually in ketosis, how to start without falling apart in week one, how to handle the side effects, and how to land safely back on whole foods when the job is done.

There are a lot of great resources out there, and I hope you use them. Read widely, watch the creators whose approach clicks for you, find the voices you trust on this. That kind of digging makes the journey yours. This guide isn't meant to replace any of that. It's meant to be the one place that has everything you actually need to get up and running, so you're never stuck waiting on me to take the first step.

## Keto vs. Carnivore

A ketogenic diet is built to flip your fuel source. Cut carbs low enough and raise fat high enough, and your body stops running on glucose and starts running on ketones, which it makes from fat. In practice that means keeping carbs somewhere between 20 and 50 grams a day, most of your calories from fat, and enough protein to hold onto muscle. To start, I want you aiming for 20. Once you're adapted and steady, you can test how high you can go and still hold ketosis. Meat, eggs, fish, low-carb vegetables, nuts, oils, cheese: in. Bread, sugar, pasta, most fruit, starchy vegetables: out.

Carnivore is keto taken to its edge. Animal foods only. Meat, eggs, some dairy, and nothing that grows from the ground. Carbs land at near-zero by default, so you're almost always in ketosis without counting a thing.



Schematic: the carb-restriction spectrum and rough macro split at each step.

Both put you in the same metabolic state. The difference is how restrictive the path is, and which one fits your life.

## **Which one, and why**

Most people start with keto, so that's what this guide is built around. But carnivore has some real advantages, and for the right person it's the easier path. A few things to weigh.

### **More restrictive can mean simpler**

Fewer foods means fewer decisions and almost no gray area. Because strict carnivore puts you at near-zero carbs by default, you may not need to count macros at all, at least at first. Most people get a long way on carnivore without tracking a thing. If you're not making progress, or your ketones won't come up, then we add tracking. But the simplicity is the appeal: no weighing food, no math, just animal foods until you're full.

This is even more true on a GLP-1 medication. Those drugs limit how much you eat by design, so between the appetite suppression and the near-zero carbs, the calorie and carb sides mostly take care of themselves. Tracking becomes a backup, not a daily chore.

### **Often easier with a family**

Bigger deal than people expect. Keto really needs a whole-house approach, the carbs have to be out of the kitchen, and that's hard with kids or a partner who isn't interested or won't help. Carnivore sidesteps a lot of that. Breakfast and lunch are usually solo anyway. And family dinner works without making everyone eat what you eat: cook a double portion of the meat while everyone else gets meat plus their sides and dessert. You're not running two kitchens, you're skipping the sides.

### **You can mix and match, within reason**

I'd rather you pick one and commit, especially at the start. It's cleaner and you'll learn your body faster. But these aren't separate worlds. If you're running strict carnivore and you want a break, working in a few keto meals is a smart way to add variety and beat diet fatigue without falling off track. A keto meal is still low-carb and still keeps you in ketosis; it just widens the menu. Use that on purpose when carnivore gets monotonous, rather than letting boredom push you off the plan.

The short version: keto gives you more variety and more room to get your nutrition right. Carnivore gives you fewer rules, fewer foods to react to, and an easier time in a busy or carb-heavy household.

## Why They Work

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Most stubborn weight and blood-sugar problems trace back to one thing: insulin resistance.

Here's the short version. Every time you eat carbs, your blood sugar rises and your pancreas releases insulin to clear it. Do that often enough, for long enough, and your cells stop listening. Now you need more insulin to do the same job. High insulin tells your body to store fat and stop burning it. That's the trap, and it's why "eat less, move more" quietly stops working for so many people.

Pull the carbs down and the whole signal changes. Less glucose coming in means less insulin. Less insulin means your body can finally reach for stored fat again. Blood sugar steadies. The spikes and crashes that drive hunger and afternoon energy dips flatten out. There's a second effect that matters just as much day to day: keto blunts appetite. Part of that is the extra protein, the most filling of the three macros, and part is the ketones themselves. Most people simply get hungry less often, which makes eating less feel effortless instead of like a fight.

For someone with insulin resistance or type 2 diabetes, that combination can move numbers fast.

### OUR TAKE

This is why I reach for keto or carnivore in specific people, not everyone. If your metabolism is healthy, you don't need a hammer this big. But when insulin resistance is the thing standing between you and progress, a few months of real carb restriction breaks the cycle in a way nothing else does. The point isn't to live here. It's to reset the system, then build something sustainable on top of it.

## Calories and Macros

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Keto lives or dies on getting your numbers right. There are three, and only three.

### Carbs

You're counting *net* carbs, not total. Net carbs are total carbs minus fiber:

$$\text{Total Carbs} - \text{Fiber} = \text{NET Carbs}$$

Fiber is a carb on the label, but your body can't absorb it, so it doesn't raise blood sugar and it doesn't count against you. A food with 25g total carbs and 5g fiber costs you 20g net. Don't avoid fiber to save carbs, you need it. Just subtract it. To start, aim for 20 grams of net carbs a day. That number gets you into ketosis quickly and keeps you there while your body adapts.

### Protein

This is the one I don't want you to skimp on. The whole point of doing this right is losing fat without losing muscle, and protein is what protects muscle. Aim for about 1 gram per pound of your **goal** weight. If you're 200 pounds and headed for 175, you're shooting for 175 grams of protein a day, every day. That target doesn't drop as you lose weight, because it's tied to where you're going, not where you are.

You may have heard that too much protein kicks you out of ketosis. There's a kernel of truth in it: eat a very large amount of protein in one sitting and your liver can convert some of it to glucose. But for what you're doing, the muscle matters far more than the worry. Protein plus exercise is what preserves muscle tissue through a long weight-loss phase, and that's worth protecting. Two simple moves keep you clear: spread your protein across the day, three meals and a snack or two rather than one giant serving, and watch your ketone strips. If you're holding ketosis, you're fine. The strips will tell you if you ever aren't.

#### PROTEIN + MOVEMENT PROTECTS MUSCLE

Any time you lose weight, some of what comes off can be muscle, not just fat. Two things guard against that: hitting your protein target every day, and moving your body, especially resistance work like lifting or bodyweight training. Do both and you steer the loss toward fat while you hold onto the muscle that keeps your metabolism strong and your body looking the way you want. This matters on any diet, not just keto. It's one of the highest-leverage habits in the whole journey.

## Fat

This is your lever, not a target to max out. Fat fills the calorie gap left by cutting carbs. Here's the thing to keep in mind: fat carries 9 calories per gram, while protein and carbs carry only 4. That's more than double. It makes fat the natural macro to fill the gap with, but it also means a little goes a long way, and a heavy hand adds up fast. A common mistake is treating keto as a license to pour butter and oil on everything; do that and fat loss stalls. Use fat to round out a meal and satisfy hunger, then stop. Turn it up to maintain weight, down to lose it.

## Do you still count calories?

Yes and no. To lose fat you need an overall calorie deficit, that math never goes away. But keto changes the game by killing your appetite, so most people fall into a deficit without weighing every gram. Track closely for the first few weeks to learn what your food actually contains. After that, most people can eyeball it and let hunger do the work.

### A DAY, ROUGHLY

A 200-pound person aiming for 175 and trying to lose fat might run around 1,900 calories: about 20g net carbs, about 175g protein, the rest from fat. Three eggs and avocado in the morning. A large salad with grilled chicken, olive oil, and cheese at lunch. A big salmon fillet with broccoli at dinner. A handful of macadamias if you're hungry. That's the whole day.

## What 20g of net carbs looks like

It's less than people expect, and it adds up faster than people expect. A few rough examples, each landing near a full starting day's budget:

- 2 cups cooked broccoli (~8g) + 2 cups raw spinach (~1g) + half an avocado (~2g) ≈ 11g, with room for more greens
- A medium tomato (~3g) + half an onion (~5g) + a bell pepper (~4g) cooked into a meal ≈ 12g
- One small apple ≈ 20g on its own, your entire day gone in one piece of fruit
- 2 tbsp of ketchup ≈ 8g, and a single slice of bread ≈ 13g

That's the lesson: your carbs should come from vegetables, where you get volume and nutrition for the carb cost, not from bread or sauce that spends the whole budget on nothing.

## Finding your own carb line

Start under 20 grams of net carbs and master that first. Going low out of the gate guarantees you get into ketosis, so you start feeling the benefits early, while your motivation is highest. That early win is worth a lot.

Once you've adapted and held under 20 comfortably, and especially once diet fatigue starts to creep in, you can begin nudging carbs up for variety, 5 grams at a time, watching your ketone strips as you go. The point where the strips start dropping is your personal ceiling. Some people can sit at 30, some closer to 50. Never go above 50 net. Carnivore sidesteps all of this; you're at near-zero without counting.

### PICK AN APP AND USE IT

I don't care which one, you just need to be tracking. Look at a few and pick the one whose feel you like: MyFitnessPal, MacroFactor, Carb Manager, Cronometer, Cal AI, Lose It!, among others. Log everything at first, and within a month you'll be able to eyeball most of it.

## Are You Actually **in Ketosis**?

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Eating keto and being *in* ketosis are not the same thing. A few too many hidden carbs and you're out without knowing it. So while you're running this, you confirm it. Every day. There are three ways to measure, and they're not equal.

### **Blood**

A finger-prick meter, same idea as the glucometer a diabetic uses. The most accurate, and it reads what's happening right now. The downside is cost: the meter is cheap but the strips add up if you test daily.

### **Breath**

A reusable meter that reads acetone on your breath. No strips to buy, decent accuracy, and you can test anywhere. Higher up-front cost, and readings can wander after exercise or a big swing in carbs.

### **Urine strips**

The cheapest by a wide margin, and where I tell most people to start. You dip a strip and match it to a color chart. They're less precise than blood and they reflect where your ketones *were* an hour or two ago, not where they are this second. They also read high when you're dehydrated and low when you're well-hydrated. None of that matters much for a daily yes-or-no on whether you're in ketosis.

#### **DO THIS**

Test with urine strips twice a day. Once in the morning before you eat, once in the evening at least two hours after dinner. You're not chasing a perfect number, you're confirming you're in ketosis at all, day after day. Any shade of purple means you're in. If the strips keep coming up negative once you're past the adaptation period, carbs are creeping in somewhere and it's time to look hard at your tracking.

One note on the numbers, so they don't throw you. Ketosis starts around 0.5 on a blood meter. You do not need to drive that number up. Higher ketones are not better results, and they're not more fat loss. Once you're reliably in ketosis, the strip has done its job. Don't let a darker color become the goal. The goal is your weight, your blood sugar, and how you feel.

## How to Start

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You can jump straight into full keto tomorrow. Plenty of people do. Most of them get hit by the keto flu in week one, feel awful, decide keto isn't for them, and quit before they ever gave it a chance.

Don't do that. Ramp in. It takes a few extra weeks up front and it's the single biggest difference between a run that sticks and a false start. Here's the staircase I want you to climb.

### THE FOUR-STEP RAMP

#### STEP 1 • WEEKS 1-2

**Clear the junk, and start tracking.** Before you touch your carb count, get processed food and alcohol out. That's the main job for the first week or two. No macros, no keto rules yet. This alone makes you feel better and takes the two hardest habits off the table before the real work starts. While you're at it, start practicing food tracking now. It takes a bit to get the hang of and turn into a habit, so start early, while it's still okay to forget a meal here and there. By the time it counts, logging will be second nature.

#### STEP 2 • WEEKS 2-4

**Build your meal library.** Work keto meals in among your normal ones until you land on 10 to 12 you actually like: 2-3 breakfasts, 2-3 lunches, 2-3 dinners, a snack or two. When you go full keto you want a deck of familiar meals ready, not a blank page and a hungry afternoon. When you find a keeper, save the whole meal in your app as one entry. Then you log "My fav keto breakfast" in one tap instead of re-entering 2 eggs plus half an avocado plus a turkey sausage every time. Build that library now and tracking stays effortless later.

#### STEP 3 • WEEKS 1-2

**Drop everything but vegetable carbs.** Cut the remaining carbs, grains, starches, fruit, sugar, with one exception: keep eating vegetables. This gets you most of the way down while your body starts adjusting and keeps fiber and nutrients in the picture.

#### STEP 4 • GO

**Pick a day and commit.** Aim for 20g net carbs, protein at your target, fat to fill the rest. Start testing your ketones. You've cleared the junk, you've got meals you like, and your body has already done part of the work. The keto flu hits a lot softer this way.

## How long until it's working?

Two timelines worth knowing.

Reaching ketosis takes a few days to about a week once you're truly under your carb threshold. That's when your body has switched over to making ketones and your strips start reading positive.

Becoming *fat-adapted*, where your body is genuinely efficient at running on fat, takes longer, usually a couple of weeks. This is when the early fatigue lifts and your energy comes back steadier than before.

The gap between those two is where most of the early misery lives, the fatigue and headaches some people feel in the first week or two. If you ramped in properly, you've already shrunk that gap before day one. That's the entire reason the ramp is worth the extra weeks: you spend them building a foundation instead of suffering through a crash.

### THE HONEST TIMELINE

Give this a real four weeks before you judge it. Week one or two can feel like an adjustment. By weeks three and four, most people feel better than they have in a long time: steady energy, no afternoon crash, hunger that finally leaves them alone. Judge the diet from there, not from the transition.

### THE FIRST WEEK ON THE SCALE

The scale also drops fast the first week, often 3 to 8 pounds. Let it motivate you, that quick win is real and it feels great. But know what it is: most of it is water leaving with your glycogen, not fat. Fat loss is the steady grind that comes after. Don't be fooled into thinking the first week's pace is the pace, and don't be discouraged when it slows down. The slow part is the part that lasts.

## The Keto Flu

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In the first one to four weeks, some people feel rough. Fatigue, headache, nausea, brain fog, irritability, muscle cramps. It's common enough that it has a name. It is not your body rejecting the diet. It's a transition effect, it's temporary, and it's largely preventable.

Two things are happening at once. First, when you cut carbs you burn through stored glycogen, and glycogen holds a lot of water. As it goes, you flush that water and the sodium and electrolytes with it. Second, you're going through a real withdrawal. Carbs and processed foods are genuinely habit-forming, and pulling them fast hits some people the way quitting any addictive substance does, the irritability, the fog, the low mood. So the keto flu is part dehydration and part withdrawal, and you treat the two halves differently. Salt, magnesium, potassium, and water fix the dehydration side. The onboarding ramp, and medication when we use it, blunts the withdrawal side.

The electrolytes first, since they clear most of the physical misery:

### Salt

Counterintuitive, but on keto you need *more*. Aim for 3 to 5 grams of sodium a day. Salt your food, and a cup of broth daily is an easy way to get there. (If you've been told to follow a low-sodium diet, check with me first.)

### Magnesium

Start with 200 mg of elemental magnesium a day, up to 350 mg if you still get cramps or sleep poorly. Magnesium glycinate is easy on the stomach.

### Potassium and water

Get potassium from food, not pills: avocado, leafy greens, salmon, mushrooms. And drink more water than feels necessary, an extra 24 ounces a day at least, especially the first two weeks. The electrolytes and the water work together; one without the other doesn't fix it.

#### DO THIS

For the physical side, don't wait it out. A cup of salty broth, a glass of water, and your magnesium will often turn it around within an hour. For the withdrawal side, the ramp is your best tool, easing off carbs over a few weeks instead of overnight is exactly why we do it, and if you're a candidate, the medication we prescribe takes a lot of the edge off too. If it's severe, lasts beyond a few weeks, or won't budge, get in touch with the clinic.

## What to Eat

This is the chapter you'll come back to. Keep it open on your phone the first few grocery trips and it stops being something you have to think about. The logic underneath every table is the same: protein and fat from whole foods are your foundation, vegetables fill the plate, and carbs are a tight budget you spend on nutrient-dense food, not bread. Three tiers throughout. **Best** is eat-freely. **OK** is fine, mind the portion. **Avoid** will knock you out or isn't worth the carbs.

### Protein

| BEST                     | OK                                 | AVOID                                          |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Beef, lamb, pork         | Bacon, sausage (watch cured sugar) | Breaded or battered anything                   |
| Chicken, turkey          | Deli meats (check fillers)         | Meats in sweet sauces (teriyaki, honey-glazed) |
| Eggs                     | Jerky (most has added sugar)       | Imitation crab, filler seafood                 |
| Salmon, sardines, tuna   | Pork rinds (snack/crunch)          | Anything "honey," "glazed," "crispy"           |
| Shellfish (shrimp, crab) | Organ meats (nutrient-dense)       | BBQ-sauced meats                               |

Bacon and sausage are fine, but read the label, sugar and starchy fillers hide in cured and pre-seasoned meats. The cleaner the ingredient list, the better.

### Fats and oils

| BEST                   | OK                          | AVOID                          |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Avocado, avocado oil   | Butter, ghee                | Margarine, spreads             |
| Extra-virgin olive oil | Coconut oil (don't overdo)  | Soybean, corn, "vegetable" oil |
| Fatty fish             | Heavy cream                 | Canola oil                     |
| Nuts and seeds         | MCT oil (can loosen stools) | Hydrogenated / trans fats      |
| Olives                 | Cheese as a fat source      | Commercial fried-food oils     |

Most of your fat should ride along with whole food rather than come from a bottle. Eat fat to satisfaction, not to hit a high number.

## Vegetables

Almost all your carbs should come from here. Simple rule: things that grow above ground are mostly fine; things that grow below ground (roots, tubers) are mostly starch.

| BEST                                  | OK                            | AVOID                           |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Leafy greens (spinach, kale, lettuce) | Tomatoes                      | Potatoes (all kinds)            |
| Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage        | Onions (small amounts)        | Sweet potatoes, yams            |
| Zucchini, cucumber                    | Bell peppers                  | Corn                            |
| Asparagus, green beans                | Brussels sprouts              | Peas                            |
| Mushrooms, celery                     | Winter squash (small amounts) | Carrots, parsnips (in quantity) |

Eat the Best column with a free hand. Leafy greens are almost all water and fiber, so net carbs are tiny and they fill your stomach.

## Dairy

Full-fat, always. The fat is the point; the carbs live in the sugar (lactose), which concentrates in the low-fat and liquid versions.

| BEST                             | OK                            | AVOID                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Hard cheeses (cheddar, parmesan) | Full-fat Greek yogurt (plain) | Milk (lactose adds up fast)         |
| Cream cheese                     | Cottage cheese (plain)        | Flavored / fruit yogurt             |
| Heavy cream, butter              | Sour cream                    | Condensed / evaporated milk         |
| Soft cheeses (brie, mozzarella)  |                               | Ice cream                           |
|                                  |                               | Low-fat / "lite" dairy (more sugar) |

If you suspect dairy is stalling you or bothering your gut, pull it for two weeks and watch. Some people are fine on cheese; some aren't.

## Nuts and seeds

Good for fat and crunch, easy to overeat, and some are far lower in carbs than others.

| BEST             | OK                           | AVOID                            |
|------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Macadamias       | Almonds                      | Cashews (high carb)              |
| Pecans           | Walnuts, hazelnuts           | Pistachios (high carb)           |
| Brazil nuts      | Sunflower, pumpkin seeds     | Candied / honey-roasted nuts     |
| Chia, flax seeds | Nut butters (no added sugar) | Trail mix with dried fruit/candy |

Portion matters more here than almost anywhere. A handful is a snack; the whole bag is a carb and calorie problem.

## Fruit

Mostly a no on keto, with two exceptions that are technically fruits and behave like vegetables.

| BEST    | OK                        | AVOID                            |
|---------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Avocado | Berries (small handful)   | Bananas, apples, oranges, grapes |
| Olives  | Lemon / lime (for flavor) | Mango, pineapple, melon          |
|         |                           | Dried fruit (sugar bombs)        |
|         |                           | Fruit juice of any kind          |

## Drinks

Where ketosis quietly dies. Most of the danger is liquid sugar.

| BEST                    | OK                                     | AVOID                       |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Water, sparkling water  | Coffee/tea (unsweetened or with cream) | Soda (regular)              |
| Black coffee, plain tea | Unsweetened almond/coconut milk        | Juice, smoothies            |
| Bone broth              | Diet soda (occasional)                 | Sweetened coffee drinks     |
|                         | Dry wine, spirits (occasional)         | Beer, sweet wine, cocktails |

On alcohol: the less the better while you're running keto. If you drink, plain spirits or a dry wine are lowest-carb, but alcohol stalls fat-burning while your body clears it and lowers your guard around food. Keep it rare.

## Sweeteners and condiments

You can keep some sweetness and flavor. The trap is the sugar hiding in sauces.

| BEST                         | OK                                   | AVOID                                   |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Salt, pepper, herbs, spices  | Stevia, monk fruit, erythritol       | Sugar, honey, maple, agave              |
| Mustard, hot sauce, vinegar  | Sugar-free condiments (check labels) | Ketchup, BBQ, sweet chili               |
| Mayo (check for added sugar) | Sugar alcohols (can cause GI upset)  | Honey mustard, teriyaki, most dressings |
| Olive oil + vinegar dressing | Dark chocolate 85%+ (small amount)   | "Fat-free" dressings (sugar-loaded)     |

Non-sugar sweeteners like stevia and monk fruit won't break ketosis, so they're a reasonable bridge while you adjust. But they keep the sweet craving alive, and a big part of what makes this reset work is that craving fading. Use them to get through the early weeks, then lean off them.

### OUR TAKE

You can do keto on processed "keto-branded" bars, shakes, and fat bombs. You'll just do it worse. Engineered keto products spike cravings, stall a lot of people, and skip the nutrition whole food gives you for free. Build your plate from the Best columns: meat, eggs, fish, leafy greens, whole-food fats. Treat the OK column as seasoning on that, not the base. The cleaner you keep it, the better this works, and the easier the transition back will be when you're done.

## Other Side Effects and Fixes

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The keto flu is the big early one. A few smaller issues show up too, and all of them have a straightforward fix.

### Constipation

The most common one after the flu. You've cut out a lot of bulk, your fluid and electrolyte balance has shifted, and things slow down.

The fix most people reach for is a fiber supplement. I'd skip it. Fiber supplements only work if you drink a serious amount of water with them. Take the fiber, skimp on the water, and you can end up *more* constipated, not less, and most people don't drink nearly enough to make it work.

So my go-to is **MiraLAX** (polyethylene glycol) instead. It pulls water into the stool and works reliably without the fiber backfire. Gentle, non-habit-forming, over the counter. Use it as needed. Beyond that, the basics help: drink more water than you think you need, keep your sodium up, eat your leafy greens, and a tablespoon or two of MCT or olive oil can keep things moving.

### Muscle cramps

Usually a sign you're low on fluid and electrolytes, the same shortfall behind the keto flu. Bump your water, get sodium to 3–5 grams a day, take 200–350 mg of magnesium. Cramps tend to resolve fast once those are topped off.

### Keto breath

As you produce ketones, one of them (acetone) comes off in your breath, fruity or like nail-polish remover. It's a sign the diet is working, which is no comfort when you're standing close to someone. It usually fades as your body adapts. Until then: drink more water, keep sugar-free gum or mints handy. Nudging carbs up slightly (still under your threshold) lowers ketone production a bit, but for most people it's not worth chasing, it passes.

## Nutrients to Watch

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Any diet that cuts out whole food groups can leave gaps. Keto is no exception. Cutting grains, fruit, and starchy vegetables takes some vitamins and minerals with them. None of this is a reason not to do keto, it's a reason to do it deliberately. Food first, supplements to fill what food doesn't.

### **Electrolytes (sodium, potassium, magnesium)**

The ones that matter most day to day. Salt your food (aim for 3 to 5 grams of sodium), get potassium from avocado and leafy greens, and supplement 200 to 350 mg of magnesium. These three are the difference between feeling good and feeling flat, and topping them up is what heads off the early fatigue, cramps, and headaches.

### **Calcium**

If you eat dairy, you're likely fine. If you don't, lean on leafy greens, sardines, and canned salmon with the bones. Supplement only after we've looked at your diet, too much calcium from pills isn't good for your heart.

### **Fiber**

Cutting grains and fruit drops your fiber. Leafy greens, avocado, nuts, and seeds cover most of it. Matters for your gut and for keeping constipation away.

### **B vitamins, vitamin C, and others**

Whole-food keto, plenty of meat, eggs, fish, and a real variety of vegetables, covers most of these without thinking about it. The people who run into trouble are the ones eating a narrow diet of just meat and cheese.

#### ON MULTIVITAMINS

A well-made one is a reasonable insurance policy, not a requirement, and no substitute for eating actual food. If you take one, buy from a reputable brand and don't pay extra for a long list of trendy ingredients dosed too low to matter. The real work is done by the food on your plate and the few targeted supplements (magnesium especially) we've already talked about. The single best move: eat a genuine variety of vegetables and whole-food proteins instead of the same three things every day. Variety closes most gaps before they open.

# 10 // WATCH OUT

## Hidden Carbs

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You can do everything right at meals and still get knocked out of ketosis by carbs you never counted. They hide in three places.

### Sauces, dressings, and condiments

The big one. Ketchup, BBQ sauce, most salad dressings, marinades, and "sugar-free" products that still contain other carbs. A few tablespoons of the wrong sauce can blow your whole day's carb budget. Check labels, and when you eat out, ask for sauces on the side or skip them.

### Medications and supplements

Both prescription and over-the-counter drugs can use carbs as fillers, sweeteners, or stabilizers, and it's not always on the label. Chewable and liquid forms are the usual offenders, gummy vitamins, liquid cold medicine, chewable antacids. The pill or capsule version usually has fewer carbs. **Don't ever stop a prescribed medication over this.** If you think a regular medication might be affecting you, bring it to me and we'll sort it out.

### "Sugar-free" traps

Sugar-free does not mean carb-free. These products often contain sugar alcohols, which still carry some carbs and calories and, in any quantity, can cause real GI distress, gas, bloating, cramping. Erythritol is the gentlest; the others (maltitol especially) cause the most trouble. A useful label habit: ingredients ending in "-ose" or "-ol" are almost always sugars or sugar alcohols.

#### WHEN THE STRIPS GO NEGATIVE

If your ketone strips suddenly go negative and your meals haven't changed, hidden carbs are the first place to look. Walk back through your sauces, your supplements, and anything labeled sugar-free before you assume the diet stopped working.

## The Exit Ramp

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This is the chapter most keto guides don't have, and it's the one that decides whether the work you just did sticks.

Remember the frame from the start: this is a tool, not a forever diet. Six to twelve months of real carb restriction to break insulin resistance, get your blood sugar in line, or move a weight you couldn't move. Once that job is done, the goal is to come off keto and land on a whole-food way of eating you can keep up, without giving back what you gained.

How you come off matters as much as how you went on. Do it the way most people do, by celebrating with a pizza and a few beers, and you'll feel terrible and undo progress fast. Do it deliberately and you keep the win.

### **Go slow, the reverse of how you came in**

Don't flip a switch back to high-carb. Add carbs back in small, deliberate steps, roughly the way you ramped down.

### **Start with the good carbs**

When you reintroduce, you're not reopening the door to everything. Bring back the carbs that earn their place: whole fruit, beans and legumes, whole grains, starchy vegetables, things with fiber and nutrition attached. The processed food and sugar you cleared out at the very beginning stays gone. You proved you don't need it.

### **Add slowly and watch**

Bring carbs up gradually, maybe 20 to 30 grams every week or two, and pay attention. Watch the scale, watch how you feel, watch your energy and hunger. You're looking for the carb level where you feel and function your best and your weight holds steady. That's your new normal, almost certainly higher than keto but lower than where you started.

#### **! IF YOU'RE ON MEDICATION**

If you take medication for blood sugar or blood pressure, stay in close contact with us, both going on and coming off. Those doses often need adjusting as your body changes, and that's not something to manage alone. Call the clinic for anything that doesn't settle or feels off.

## **Expect the water weight to come back**

When carbs come back in, your body restocks glycogen, and glycogen pulls water with it. So you'll see a few pounds reappear on the scale in the first week or two off keto. It's the same water you lost fast at the very start, just running in reverse. It is not fat, and it's expected. This is exactly why, depending on how much you're trying to lose, we aim to overshoot your goal before flipping back, so when the water returns you settle right where you want to be. It's motivating on the front end when it drops, and disheartening on the back end when it returns, so know it's coming and don't let it rattle you.

## **Keep what worked, this is the real prize**

This is one of the most important things to come out of a keto or carnivore run, and most people miss it. Along the way you learned to meal prep, to cook for yourself at home, to build meals around whole foods, and to track calories and macros so you actually understand portion size. Those skills are the real prize, bigger than the number on the scale. The diet was the reset. The habits are what hold the result for good. You learned them. Keep using them, and you keep the win.

## **A note on testing**

For most people this doesn't need much medical supervision, mostly counseling and encouragement. The one practical exception is bloodwork. Cutting carbs and eating more fat commonly drives lipids up while you're on the diet, which is one more reason it isn't a forever plan. So the sensible move is simple: test before you start, and test again once you're back to eating carbs, so we're reading your numbers in the state you'll actually be living in. If you're a true diabetic, we'll stay in closer contact, since blood-sugar medication often needs adjusting as you go.

GO GET IT

# You've Got The Playbook

What keto and carnivore are, why they work, how to track them, how to start without getting flattened in week one, how to handle the bumps, and how to land it when you're done.

The hardest part isn't understanding any of this. It's the first two weeks of doing it. Ramp in the way we laid out, keep your salt and water up, lean on whole food, and you'll get through the part that stops most people. After that it gets easier, and the results tend to show up faster than you expect.

We're in this with you. If you hit something this guide doesn't answer, if a symptom worries you, or if you just want a second set of eyes on how it's going, reach out. That's what we're here for.

**Now go get it.**

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This guide is for education only and isn't a substitute for individual medical advice. Talk to us about your specific situation before making changes, especially if you take medication or have a medical condition.