

FRUIT AND THE KETO DIET



The keto diet can be challenging at times. You have already familiarized yourself with the foods you should include in your diet, but what about fruit? Some people wonder if they can eat fruit on a keto diet or not. Yes, fruit is allowed in moderation on the keto diet plan.

Fruit has lots of health benefits. It contains vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants that fight disease in your body. However, some fruits are quite high in carbs so need to be eaten sparingly when you're on a keto diet plan. But, even though fruit has excellent nutritional qualities, you should be very careful when you're consuming fruits on keto. That's because most fruits are high in a sugar called fructose. This could turn off the fat burning process when you're trying to lose weight; not what you want!

What are the best fruits to eat on a keto diet?

First of all, let's address the fruit least likely to pop into your head - avocado pears, tomatoes and olives.

Avocado pears are low in carbohydrate content. They contain an abundance of healthy fats. They can be eaten as they are in savoury dishes - think avocado and prawn salad. But avocados are very versatile so can be used in many recipes. When we think about fruit we tend to think of sweet recipes rather than savoury and this is where avocado shines. It can be used in brownies, cakes, fat bombs and even mousses.

Next are tomatoes which are classed as fruit, but are low in fructose (fruit sugar) and carbs. (1) They are full of vitamins too so don't disregard them when thinking about fruit in the keto diet. Having said that, avoid sun-dried tomatoes.

This is because the process of drying concentrates the amount of sugar and increases the carbs by two thirds (2). Tomatoes make great sauces for meats and fish dishes. Try them with red salmon!

So, what about olives? Like avocado, these are a fruit and are full of healthy fats. They can be eaten as a snack to keep hunger pangs at bay. They complement our other alternative fruits, avocado and tomato beautifully. This makes a delicious, healthy, fruity meal in itself. Plus, olives go with almost any savoury dish!

Next let's look at the fruits that we find in the fruit bowl. Which ones are the most keto-friendly?

Berries such as raspberries, strawberries, blueberries and blackberries are the fruits lowest in carbs. (3)

These fruits are great to use as snacks for that hit of sweetness, if you miss biscuits and candy. They are delicious and full of vitamins, minerals and other beneficial compounds; all of which keep you healthy as well as slim. (4)

The berries with the lowest carbs are raspberries and blackberries; followed by strawberries and then blueberries. You can add them to keto ice cream, decorate keto cheesecake or have them as a fruit salad. Remember that they may be low in carbs, but eat them as a treat. Not every day and not too many at once.

As with sun-dried tomatoes it is best to avoid dried fruits such as raisins, dates and prunes. These are a lot higher in carbs and sugar than their fresh counterparts. Eating these will switch your body to burning glucose instead of fat. This will undo all your hard work and slow the keto weight loss process down. (5)

When you are on a keto diet it is hard to overcome the craving for that sugar hit! Fruit is much better than sugar or sugar substitutes. This is because fruit contains fibre. Fibre slows down how fast sugar is absorbed in the body (6). Slow and steady wins the race! You don't want sharp peaks in blood sugar and insulin if you are trying to lose weight.

Citrus fruits are full of fibre. Which means that oranges, lemons, limes and grapefruit can be included on your keto shopping list. We don't tend to eat lemons and limes due to the sour taste. Instead use these fruits as a flavouring for puddings and desserts. Like lemons and limes, oranges, clementines and grapefruits are full of vitamin C which we need to stay healthy. This vitamin helps boost our immune system and helps to fight off viruses and bacteria that cause illness (7). When following a keto diet, you need to remember that losing weight isn't the 'be all and end all'. Being healthy is more important.

When on a weight loss diet, whether keto or not, it is a good idea to drink plenty of water. Not everyone likes the taste of water. Adding the juice from citrus fruits not only adds vitamin C, but makes water more palatable. Fruit juice is not really allowed when on a keto diet. You could consider diluting it in water to overcome this. That way you increase your water and vitamin intake in one go. Another way to get water into you is tea. Lemons and limes add flavour to tea if you don't want to use full fat milk or cream all the time.

Pomegranate is a sweet fruit and tastes delicious when eaten alone or added to salads. Pomegranates are quite high in carbs but are not the quickest fruit to eat. Because it takes time to eat them it is harder to overeat them. They are really worth the effort though as they pack a punch with anti-oxidants, fibre and vitamins. Don't be tempted to buy seeds already shelled or your carbohydrate and sugar levels will go through the roof.

Monk fruit, is worth including on our list of fruits. It is an Asian fruit belonging to the cucumber, melon and squash family. It is a round green fruit between the size of a lemon and orange. On the inside are lots of seeds that have a very sweet taste. It is not a fruit eaten fresh like an orange. The extract is used as an alternative to sugar which is very popular among keto-dieters (9).

Hopefully you can now see that you can eat some fruit on a keto diet. With that said a couple of final points are these. Try and eat fruit raw rather than cooking it. Cooking breaks down the fibre. This means that the sugar content is then more easily absorbed in the body. Having said that, don't try and eat rhubarb raw.

Finally, do not be tempted to have fruit smoothies on a keto diet. Like cooking, blitzing fruit in a food processor breaks down the fibre.

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