

KETO FOR WOMEN OVER 40



Once women turn 40 they begin to notice changes in their body. This means that a woman wishing to follow the keto diet needs to make some tweaks to the diet so that it doesn't increase health issues that she is already facing. So what does she need to know?

One thing that middle-aged women have to deal with is the onset of the menopause. This starts with the perimenopause as the body starts to wind down their reproductive system (1).

During the menopause, hormone levels start to decline; especially estrogen. This change in estrogen can cause hot flashes, needing to pass urine urgently, trouble sleeping and depression and mood swings.

Unfortunately another change that women notice is weight gain. This weight is more likely to be around the belly and can lead to obesity very quickly. Obesity puts women at a higher risk of dying from heart problems (2). This is why women over 40 start to think about losing weight, in particular the keto diet.

The keto diet is high fat and low carbohydrate and forces the body to burn fat for energy. This helps with weight loss by helping to balance insulin levels. The problem is that women over 40 may lose a few pounds but actually feel terrible at the same time. This is due to Keto Flu. Keto flu is a variety of symptoms that happen as your body adapts from using carbohydrates for energy to using fat (3).

As a woman over 40, you are probably holding down a job, raising children and running a home. So the last thing you need is to feel tired, bad tempered, nauseous, and constipated; all symptoms of keto flu.

A way to overcome this is to make sure that the food being eaten is not just meat, fish and dairy products. The body needs lots of vitamins and minerals to fight off these symptoms. The best place to get these nutrients is from cruciferous vegetables. These vegetables include cauliflower, broccoli, sprouts, kale, spinach and broccoli.

Women over 40 need to be aware that many foods eaten on the keto diet can cause acidity in the body. These foods include bacon, cheese, pork rinds and even butter. Long term, this acidity can cause inflammation. Inflammation is not good as it causes diseases such as cancer (4).

During peri-menopause the levels of some hormones starts to reduce. These hormones are estrogen, progesterone and testosterone and they have an anti-inflammatory effect (5,6, 7).

Therefore, women are hit by a double whammy. The keto diet causes inflammation and the lack of hormones means it can happen faster than when a women is under 40.

A good way to overturn acidity, and subsequently inflammation, is to eat lots of alkaline foods. These include cruciferous vegetables and healthy fats. Avocado, olives, nuts and olive oil are alkaline fats (8).

Eating foods that contain phytoestrogens, which mimic estrogen, can also help reduce inflammation. These foods include edamame beans, soy beans, tofu, flaxseeds, and sesame seeds (9). In addition, cruciferous vegetables help in converting the phytoestrogens into estrogen that the body can use (10).

The next tweak to the keto diet it is necessary to make when you are a female over 40 is to eat more protein. This is because women tend to be more likely to develop sarcopenia (loss of muscle). (11) And also the body is less efficient at making protein for growth and repair as we get older. So more protein needs to come from the diet. A regular keto diet is about 20% protein but when you are an older female, it is an idea to increase this to 30% protein. In other words, 30% of your daily calories should come from protein.

The next thing that is different when you are over 40, is a tendency to get more aches and pains. This can be due to inflammation. Unfortunately, inflammation in the joints can cause arthritis. And when you are a woman over 40 you are more likely to suffer from arthritis than men (12). Arthritis causes wear and tear on the joints because the collagen and cartilage breaks down. This makes the pain even worse.

There is something called NLRP3 inflammasome which the body uses to control inflammation. Normally this would be a good thing and enable a cut or graze (on the outside of the body) to heal (13). However, on the inside of the body, if there is too much NLRP3 present, the inflammation becomes chronic. This then leads to disease. Unfortunately, as we get older inflammation can occur more. The great thing about the keto diet is that ketones lower the level of NLRP3 (14).

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The next thing that women over 40 need to do differently to their younger counterparts is to include collagen in the keto diet. As mentioned, collagen is found in the joints, but is broken down in arthritic joints. Collagen is a protein so can be eaten in the keto diet. The best way to get it in the diet is by boiling up animal bones and making a broth (15). The bones will need to be boiled for about 12 hours. A slow cooker is great for this. Remember to add apple cider vinegar to get all of the nutrients out of the bones.

The great thing about this broth is that it has many other benefits other than healing the joints. It has been shown to help women to sleep more soundly. This is good news as sleep is often disturbed during the menopausal stages of life (16).

This broth can be drunk when you are fasting instead of having a meal. Fasting is the next thing that overweight women over 40 should consider including in the keto diet regime. Being overweight leads to the body aging faster (17).

The aging process leads to more wrinkles, which is something women over 40 tend to be concerned about. It also means that we could have kidney or heart problems earlier than those of a healthy weight.

Fasting involves not eating for a few hours. This gives the body time to digest food and for the hormones and enzymes involved in digestion to be eliminated. It also means that when food is not being eaten the body burns stored fat for energy. Fasting also enables a very complicated process in cells that means DNA can rejuvenate (18). This slows down the aging process. Oxidative stress also causes aging but can be slowed down by the keto diet. This is because ketones (produced by breaking down fat) reduce oxidative stress (19).

In conclusion, women over 40 following the keto diet are advised to increase protein, including collagen. They should eat plenty of cruciferous vegetables and foods containing phytoestrogen to help the body fight inflammation. And finally they should fast alongside the keto diet to slow down the aging process.

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