

STAPLE FOODS FOR THE KETO DIET



When trying to start a new diet or change your current lifestyle, it might be difficult at first. Your body is used to eating certain foods all the time, so giving up those kinds of food might be extremely difficult. With the keto diet, you have to keep several things in mind when it comes to what kinds of food you need to have readily available at home if you want to give this kind of lifestyle a shot. This means high fat, high protein foods.

As with any diet it is easy to get overwhelmed with all different kinds of suggestions and advice about what exactly is needed and what isn't. We all lead busy lives so it is a good idea to have a few keto staples in your kitchen. That way it keeps you on track, as there will always be something keto-friendly to eat.

Before embarking on this diet it might be an idea to get rid of, or put away out of reach, all the foods that are not permitted. These foods include breads, anything containing sugar – such as cakes and biscuits; fruit, vegetables, pasta and rice.

Here is a list of the core food items you should have in the store cupboard, fridge or freezer when following a keto diet.

Offal

Offal means organ meats which primarily includes liver and kidney but also includes heart and tongue. It might sound somewhat strange to start our list with offal, but organ meats are really healthy and very tasty, contrary to popular belief. They are also cheaper cuts of meat if you are on a budget.

One of the main reasons for starting the list with offal is that it contains very little fat, yet has high quality protein. It also contains the important nutrient vitamin B12, although this is also found in beef.

Another reason why you should try to include offal in your keto diet is because it contains the nutrient choline, which is very important for your brain function. The keto diet can affect your brain and mental health, due to the high fat content which is inflammatory. Therefore, including some brain protective foods is a good idea. In addition, offal also provides a lot of valuable nutrients such as iron, selenium and vitamins A and D (1).

Eggs

The next keto diet food is eggs. Eggs are very versatile and they can be used in cooking, baking or eaten on their own. Ideal for breakfast, they contain protein which is of course one of the main reasons why you eat eggs; but all that protein comes with fat as well. The keto diet recommends high-fat during the first few weeks so eating eggs will provide you with a delicious fat in the yolk.

Eggs also contain choline which again is good for your brain health and function. You should try to cook your eggs in butter or coconut oil if possible as these two types of fats are encouraged on the keto lifestyle. Eggs are usually pretty cheap too, especially when buying them locally at farmers markets.

Fat

As we have mentioned fat now seems a good time to continue with this ingredient. Butter and coconut oil are great but try and add some olive oil to your meals. Olive oil is not a saturated fat so is much better for your heart. Other healthy fats come from eating olives so these are great to have in the fridge. And don't forget creamy, delicious avocados. Although they are classed as a fruit, they are one of the few included in the keto diet due to their high fat content. And they are rich in vitamin E so are great for healthy skin!!
(2)

Nuts and seeds

Nuts, a keto staple, are another source of healthy fats and are great for snacking on. When you are on a keto diet you cannot have all those carb-loaded snacks like biscuits, chocolate cakes and crisps (chips). Nuts make a great snack, as do seeds - pumpkin seeds are one of the best. You can also have nut butters which are delicious but just be careful not to overindulge. Another plus of nuts is that you can keep them with you when you are out and about. This is a good idea in case you have to skip a meal to keep cravings at bay. Macadamia nuts are tasty and one of the best type of nuts for this.

Dairy

To get a healthy dose of fat and protein when on the keto diet try to eat full-fat dairy products. Cheese is probably the best example, but again just be careful not to overeat it as it can add up quickly in terms of calories if you do. There is a huge variety of cheese to choose from but don't always think of dairy. Goat's and sheep's milk cheeses are also delicious too.

Full fat milk is great to keep in the fridge and the keto diet is pretty much the only diet that encourages you to eat cream.

Meat and Poultry

Poultry contains a lot of protein so makes a great addition to your meal plan on the keto diet. Turkey meat is usually the cheapest option, but if money is not an issue don't forget duck and goose. These are richer meats but add a little bit more variety into your keto regime. Then there is beef and pork - either the full range of cuts of meat or bacon, sausage and deli meats.

Concentrate on meat from animals that are grass-fed or raised outside in fields. Do your best to avoid using meat from farmed animals and also processed meat to the greatest extent possible. A small amount of high quality protein is better than a larger amount of poor quality. This is due to omega 3 fat being higher in grass fed and organic meat which is much better for you (3).

Fish and seafood

Fish can sometimes be overlooked on the keto diet but consuming oily fish, in particular, provides your body with essential omega3 fatty acids. Omega 3's are anti-inflammatory and are necessary to try and offset the inflammatory nature of the keto diet. Tinned mackerel, salmon and small fish such as sardines and anchovies are great to have in your store cupboard. It is recommended to have at least 2 meals containing oily fish and it is even more important on a keto diet. (4) Fish and seafood should also ideally be wild caught.

Vegetables

When thinking about the keto diet some people think that they are not allowed to eat vegetables. This is not the case. Vegetables contain vitamins and minerals that keep us healthy. These nutrients are necessary to keep complicated processes in our body working efficiently. But not all vegetables are equal as far as the keto diet is concerned.

The best vegetables to eat are those grown above ground. Vegetables grown below ground, especially potatoes, are much higher in carbs (5). So fill your fridge with lots of fresh spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, okra, courgettes, asparagus and cucumber. Make sure you have vegetables with every meal.

Pantry staples

Finally, you have the main ingredients for your meals but there are a few other foods that it is a good idea to keep in stock.

To season your food, enhance the flavour and make each meal taste different, keep a good stock of salt, pepper, herbs and spices. When you are on a diet boredom can quickly kick in. Making sure each meal is flavoursome will overcome this.

Fresh garlic, chilli and root ginger are other essentials to keep your food from tasting bland. In addition, garlic and ginger are anti-inflammatory, so are well worth adding to your meals to offset the detrimental effects of the keto diet (6). Different oils also help to give variety to the flavours of your keto meals - try sesame, coconut, olive and avocado oils.

You now have a list of the main items you will need to follow the keto diet. Meat, fish and poultry can be expensive so it might be worth considering buying wholesale and/or frozen. With some careful budgeting and a little planning you will always have some keto-friendly foods in stock.

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