

Dave's Holistic Ketogenic Lifestyle Plan

Disclaimer

This is **NOT** medical advice. I am not a doctor, nor do I have any specialized dietary training. As always, consult your physician and do your own research before undertaking any major lifestyle change. What I have documented here is the result of my personal research and self-experimentation as of December 2018.

Background

Over the past 30+ years, I have experimented with a variety of “diets” – everything from general calorie restriction, to low-fat, to all-protein, to carnivore, to vegetarian.

I've crash-dieted with the Cabbage Soup diet, the grapefruit diet, juice fasts, and other liquid-only diets even going so far as to have a custom protein powder blend created specifically for me.

FODMAP, Blood-Type, Fit for Life, Paleo, Slow-Carb, Zone, gluten-free – if I've heard of it, I've likely tried it.

I've gone all-in with big names like Atkins, Body for Life, Weight Watchers, Nutrisystem, South Beach, Mediterranean, and even Dr. Phil's Ultimate Weight Solution, spending thousands of dollars for little or no benefit.

So, what's the problem? Did I not have the willpower? Did I not “try” hard enough? Did I miss some important aspect of a particular plan? No, ask my wife – I'm fiercely adherent to my diets.

Here's where it gets complicated. Every diet works for a subset of the population. The trouble is that human physiology is extraordinarily complex. We all have a completely unique digestive system. Yes, we all have the basic components in common, and the fundamental mechanisms are the same.

However, the devil is in the details. For example, digestion starts in the mouth – is your saliva identical to anyone else? Is the composition of your stomach acid the same as anyone else? How long are your small and large intestines? How efficient are they at extracting nutrients from your food? Are your gallbladder, pancreas, and liver all functioning in exactly the same way as everyone (or anyone) else? Are the ratios between the thousands of different strains of microbes living in your digestive tract anywhere close to anyone else? No.

The fact is that every diet works, and every diet fails, **for some people**. The only “right answer” if we can call it that is to do your own research. Experiment on yourself. Take notes, document your successes and your failures. Keep track of how you feel, your energy levels, and how your unique body responds to the changes over time.

The lifestyle plan I've documented here works **FOR ME**. I make no guarantees that it will provide any specific benefit for anyone else. Through your experimentation, you may find that your body functions better with a different food plan, or you may find that you need more or less sleep. There are an infinite number of variations possible here. Use this as a starting point for your own lifestyle design journey. Or not. Only you can decide what works for you.

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Overview

This plan relies on four main pillars: Diet, Exercise, Sleep, and Stress Management.

Diet: High-Fat, Medium-Protein, Low-Carb

- 70+% of your calories should come from healthy fats, 20-30% from protein, and as little as possible from carbohydrates. This is not a “zero carb” diet. The goal is to achieve and maintain a state of ketosis. Once that occurs, you can experiment and establish your personal carb tolerance.
- No grains (wheat, rice, corn, etc.), or sugar of any kind. Seriously.
- Use Intermittent Fasting technique: Two moderate meals in one 8-hour window per day. *(For example, I usually eat between Noon-1pm and again at 7-8pm – no snacks)*

Exercise:

- Do whatever form of exercise is comfortable and achievable.
- Exercise as often as possible for you and your circumstances.
- Walking is especially beneficial particularly for those not accustomed to regular exercise.

Sleep: Minimum 8 hours per night – the room should be as dark & quiet as possible.

Stress Management: Reduce stress through meditation, 10 minutes per day, every day.

Dietary Guidelines

- Unprocessed, locally sourced, grass-fed meats (whenever possible).
- Cruciferous vegetables, peppers, fermented vegetables, etc.
- Healthy fats (butter, olive oil, coconut oil), cultured butter, ghee, etc.
- Full fat dairy in limited quantities (heavy cream, hard cheeses, etc., **only if well-tolerated**).
- Unsweetened beverages only (water, coffee, tea) – **avoid artificial sweeteners**.
- Restrict all carbs to less than 30g per day (<20g per day when entering or reentering ketosis).

Meditation

1. Find a quiet place to sit in a chair with good posture, feet on the ground, hands in your lap
2. Take a couple of deep breaths and set a timer (start with 2 minutes and gradually work up to 10)
3. Gently close your eyes and try to focus on the physical point where you most feel your breath (nose, chest, belly). Breathe naturally. Try to observe your breath without interrupting it.
4. Each time your mind wanders (and it will) bring your focus back to your breath. The point is not to stop your mind from ever wandering, but to catch it in the act, and refocus. The repeated practice of catching yourself thinking about other things and redirecting your thoughts to your breath again is the exercise of meditation, calming the mind.
5. Repeat the process until your timer goes off. Eventually build up to 10 minutes per session.

Notes

Achieving and maintaining a state of ketosis has been very beneficial for me and is easy to sustain once the body adapts. The first month of this plan was the most difficult. Most people are accustomed to using carbohydrates as their primary fuel source and making the switch to burning fats is a challenge.

Most people experience fatigue and lethargy during the first few days, get discouraged and quit. This is referred to as the “Low-Carb Flu” and indicates that your body has exhausted most of its supply of stored glycogen but is still resistant to generating fuel from dietary fats.

It can take 10 days or more of consistent adherence to the diet for some people to make the switch to burn fats the first time. I found that using keto test strips to monitor my level of ketosis was very helpful.

Ketogenic Food List

Any combination of foods in this list is acceptable.

When preparing meals, I made sure to use plenty of fat, and a small to moderate amount of protein. It is easy to consume too much protein, which will inhibit ketosis. Switching from steaming or boiling, to sautéing with butter, olive oil, or coconut oil is an effortless way to add fat. Also consider adding a butter-based sauce.

Read all food labels! Make sure the carbs per serving is minimal – low single digits per serving (in grams, not percentage). Also, avoid all foods that contain any form of sugar or grains (including corn). The fewer ingredients listed on the label, the better – it is best to buy foods where the food itself is the only ingredient.

Fresh is best, frozen is acceptable, canned (store bought) only if absolutely necessary (no added sugar!)

Proteins	Fats	Vegetables
<p>*Most meats are fine, select higher-fat cuts whenever possible.</p> <p>Beef Chicken Eggs Herring Lamb Pork Salmon Shellfish</p>	<p>Avocado Oil Butter / Ghee Coconut Oil Lard / Tallow Macadamia Oil Olive Oil Red Palm Oil Palm Shortening Duck Fat Dairy* Heavy Cream Full-fat cheeses (limited) Full-fat Sour Cream (limited) Full-fat Yogurt (limited)</p> <p>*Only consume dairy if you are not lactose sensitive. All dairy should be full-fat, whole milk/cream-based, with no added sugar or flavors.</p>	<p>Arugula Artichokes Asparagus Broccoli Brussels Sprouts Cabbage Carrots (limited quantity) Cauliflower Celery Chives Cucumber Eggplant Endives Fennel Garlic Green Beans Jicama Kale Leafy Greens (all kinds) Leeks Lettuce (all kinds) Mushrooms (all kinds) Okra Olives Onions Parsley Peppers (all kinds) Radishes Scallion Shallots Seaweed (All Sea Vegetables) Spinach Swiss Chard Tomatoes Watercress Zucchini</p>
<p>Spices</p> <p>All spices that do not include sugar or artificial ingredients are acceptable in reasonable amounts including:</p> <p>Sea Salt Black Pepper Basil Cayenne Cumin Oregano Thyme Rosemary Sage Turmeric Parsley Cilantro Cinnamon Nutmeg Cloves Allspice Ginger Cardamom Paprika Dill</p>	<p>Butter Sauce Recipe</p> <p>Heat butter in a bowl or measuring cup until just melted. Add Frank's Original Hot Sauce to taste & whisk together. Pour over chicken or vegetables. This concept works with almost any no-sugar condiment.</p> <p>Fruit</p> <p>Fruits are problematic due to naturally high sugar content. Fruit consumption is NOT a dietary requirement. If you choose to eat fruit, stick to small servings of whole fruit. Avoid fruit juice.</p>	

Recipes & Info

There are many websites dedicated to ketogenic eating, recipes and helpful tips. These are a few I've found helpful:

<https://www.wickedstuffed.com/category/keto-recipes/>

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipes/22959/healthy-recipes/keto-diet/>

<https://www.delish.com/keto-recipes/>

Keep the allowed food list handy as some recipes available online include questionable / semi-keto ingredients, and it can be easy to interrupt ketosis by overconsuming them. Also, be very wary of sugar substitutes and artificial ingredients. Many products that claim to be keto-friendly contain ingredients (specifically sugar substitutes like erythritol, mannitol, maltitol, etc.) that can cause very unpleasant gastrointestinal effects.

What About Alcohol?

Many people can tolerate reasonable amounts of alcohol once ketosis is well established; however, this is up to the individual to determine. For most people, the consumption of liquor (whisky, bourbon, vodka, scotch, etc., with no mixers) or dry red wine in amounts appropriate for them will not significantly affect ketosis.

Gut Health Protocol

A Ketogenic diet naturally supports a healthy gut biome by starving out the pathogenic bacteria and allowing healthy bacteria to flourish.

Even so, it is important to consume as many different naturally fermented foods as possible with special focus on these:

- Sauerkraut
- Pickles
- Kimchi
- Kombucha
- Kefir*

**Note about Kefir* – while Kefir is an excellent source of healthy probiotics, it can contain too much residual sugar from the fermentation process to support a ketogenic state or may trigger a lactose response in those that have lactose sensitivity. Do not consume Kefir while you are trying to achieve ketosis the first time. Once you have been in continuous ketosis for at least 7-10 days, you may slowly add Kefir to your diet. If this causes you to drop out of ketosis, eliminate the Kefir, regain ketosis, then decide whether to try again with a smaller amount. It also helps if you allow your Kefir to ferment for extra time, allowing it to fully consume the milk sugar to reduce the residual carbs as much as possible. This will make it stronger, and sourer, but increases the probiotic effectiveness.

Ideally, you would want to manage the entire end-to-end process. From planting & growing the vegetables, to fermenting, to storage. It's very important to include soil-based organisms (SBO) into your probiotic regimen, and the absolute best way to do that is to eat raw or fermented vegetables you've grown yourself. Cooking destroys the SBOs, so make sure you're eating them raw or fermented only.

These websites have great fermented food recipes:

<http://paleoleap.com/fermented-food-recipes/>

<https://www.culturesforhealth.com/learn/recipe/>

<http://www.wildfermentation.com>