

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF FOOD

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PREVENTIVE HEALTH

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- HOW TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF FOOD
- THE KETOGENIC DIET – A BEGINNERS GUIDE
- HEALTHY FOOD SWAPS
- THE SKINNY ON YOGURT: 4 MYTHS DEBUNKED



HOW TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF FOOD

By Andrea Stokes, RD, Definitions



Food has the potential to offer a variety of benefits, including increased energy, decreased risk of disease and illness, better management of chronic disease, improved immune function, and it allows us to be more productive at work and play. Additionally, an often overlooked benefit of food is its potential to bring people together to foster healthy social relationships, in addition to healthy bodies.

We treat eating as mostly an individual choice and a solitary act - but the truth is that most of us operate, and eat, as part of a wider social network. Whether it be immediate or extended family, office coworkers, community groups, or a tight-knit group of friends, how we eat and who we eat with can have a big impact on our health and social relationships.

THE SOCIAL SIDE OF EATING

Food is not just for survival. It is a way to express our identity, culture, and emotions. It's an opportunity to come together with the people we love and share an experience, catch up on each other's lives, and have a conversation. Humans are the only animals who combine eating with ritual - sitting at a table, surrounding ourselves with other people, using food to celebrate, to grieve, and to comfort. We are also the only animals who cook. The ritual of cooking and eating, and all the social connotations connected with eating, is a major part of what makes us human. Unfortunately, busy schedules and increased reliance on pre-made, fast-food meals is making these rituals - and all the benefits they offer - less common.

BENEFITS OF HOME COOKING

- Cooking at home is more cost-effective (as long as you plan your meals and make use of everything you buy!)
- Reduces your consumption of added sugars, sodium, and processed foods
- Makes it easier to accommodate allergies, intolerances, and picky eaters
- Children involved in cooking are more likely to eat their meals and develop healthier eating habits
- Allows for better portion control
- Reduces your carbon footprint
- Recipes passed from generation to generation helps to preserve cultural knowledge
- Brings friends and family together

BENEFITS OF COOKING AND EATING TOGETHER

- Adults who eat together tend to be healthier and happier overall
- Eating home cooked meals together is associated with increased longevity
- Children and teens who eat with their family are more likely to have healthier diets, decreased risk of disordered eating, and perform better in school

- Social connections reinforced over meals can help us cultivate a sense of belonging and even reduce symptoms of depression
- While today's busy lifestyles may not allow you to eat with others as often as you'd like, make a point to schedule time to meet a friend for supper, time your lunch meal with a co-worker, or set a routine of having a family meal at least twice per week.

Other tips to help you make time for cooking and eating together include:

- Keep your kitchen organized and stocked with the basic equipment, utensils, and ingredients that you need - this will help make cooking less stressful.
- Each weekend, make a point to plan your meals for the week ahead and make a shopping list based on that meal plan - this will help you to buy only what you need.
- Consider prepping items in advance or doing some batch cooking so you can cut down on cooking time throughout the busy week.
- Take stock of how much time you spend in front of TV, computer, or smartphone. You might be able to use some of that downtime to devote to planning, preparing, and enjoying meals.

Find ways to enjoy cooking - make it a social affair (either with family, friends, or roommates) whenever possible. If cooking solo, play music or a podcast, or have your favourite TV show on in the background.



Eating together can happen at breakfast, lunch or supper. Choose the meal that gives you the most time to talk and connect. You might not be able to eat together every day, but make a point to schedule in group eating any time you can!

At Medisys, our registered dietitians are here to help you adopt healthy eating habits, adapted to your lifestyle. [Click here](#) to learn more about our nutrition services.



THE KETOGENIC DIET – A BEGINNERS GUIDE

By Dr. Elyssa Elman and Lauren Richer, M.Sc, RD, Medisys Montreal

The Ketogenic diet has been rising in popularity over the past few years thanks to its many benefits, including weight loss and improved health. Unlike some other popular diets, “keto” is not a fad and is here to stay. In fact, numerous studies have shown benefits of the Ketogenic diet in the context of diabetes, metabolic syndrome, epilepsy, and Alzheimer’s disease among others.

Our Medisys clinic in Montreal is now offering the services of the Keyto Center. Its objective is to help people improve their weight, diabetes and other metabolic issues through an approach based on real, whole foods - no supplements, no prepackaged meals. Dr Elyssa Elman and Lauren Richer, M.Sc, RD, directors of the Keyto Center, have been helping patients lose weight and get healthy for several years now. In this article, they answer some of the most commonly asked questions regarding this diet.

WHAT IS A KETOGENIC DIET?

The Ketogenic diet is a low carbohydrate, high fat, and moderate protein diet. By drastically reducing carbohydrate intake and providing the body with enough fat, the body switches from burning sugar to using fat as fuel¹, which is what’s known as a state of nutritional ketosis. When this happens, the body becomes efficient at burning fat and harvesting energy from it. This diet can lead to significant improvement in glucose and insulin levels, as well as other beneficial side effects like mental clarity, improved energy levels, and greater concentration¹.

WHAT IS NUTRITIONAL KETOSIS? IS IT THE SAME AS KETOACIDOSIS?

Ketosis is a natural metabolic state in which fat provides fuel for the body and the brain. When the body uses fat as fuel, it will break fat down and the by-product of this process produces ketones². To go into ketosis, people generally need to be eating fewer than 40g net carbohydrates a day, and as few as 20g net.

Ketoacidosis, on the other hand, is a dangerous and life-threatening condition, associated with diabetes, which results from very high levels of ketones and blood sugar². This condition can lead to numerous symptoms and even death².

A low-carbohydrate diet can trigger ketosis, whereas poor diabetes management is the main trigger for ketoacidosis.

WHY ADD FAT? IS THAT DANGEROUS?

When we restrict carbohydrate intake, fat becomes our primary energy source. Dietary fat has many functions in the body other than energy, like helping us absorb vitamins, regulating inflammation and immunity, satiety, and repair to name a few. Fats are found in both animal (meat, fish, eggs) and plant sources (avocado, oils, olives)³. Although fat has developed a bad reputation over the years, studies have failed to show a link between saturated fat and heart disease. It is important to mix up your sources of fat. Not all fats are created equal and so there are some fats that should be avoided like vegetable oils and seed oils³.

On a Ketogenic diet, we aim to add 2 tbsp of fat per meal. Fat is tasty and is a great way to flavor a meal!

I KEEP HEARING THAT A KETO DIET HELPS TREAT METABOLIC SYNDROME BUT WHAT IS METABOLIC SYNDROME?

Metabolic syndrome is a group of conditions that generally occur together and increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes⁴. About 1 in 5 Canadians meet the diagnosis for metabolic syndrome⁴. It is diagnosed when a person has three or more of the following conditions⁴:

- High blood pressure
- High blood glucose levels
- High triglycerides
- Low HDL-cholesterol
- Large waist circumference

I AM LACTOSE INTOLERANT, CAN I STILL BE ON THIS TYPE OF DIET?

Being on a Ketogenic diet does not require you to eat dairy. Dairy is a good source of fat and protein, as well as calcium, vitamin D, and phosphorus; however, it is not essential in this lifestyle. There are numerous dairy alternatives that are keto-friendly and an array of dairy-free keto recipes that are equally delicious!

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE KETOGENIC DIET?

Keto has been shown to have widespread health and wellness benefits⁵ including:

1. Decreased appetite and fewer cravings: many diets tend to leave people feeling hungry and miserable which eventually leads to them giving up. The Ketogenic diet is naturally highly satisfying so many people find they don’t need to eat as much or as often to feel full. People often notice how they are no longer tempted by the sugary, or junky foods as they once were.

2. Weight loss: cutting carbohydrates is one of the most effective ways to lose weight. Studies have shown that a low-carb diet leads to 2-3 times more weight loss than a low fat diet.

3. Improved blood sugar and insulin levels: a low-carb lifestyle has been shown to significantly reduce both blood sugar and insulin. Some people with diabetes may need to reduce their insulin dosage by 50% within the first couple of weeks. A study conducted in 2008 showed that in people with type 2 diabetes, 95% had reduced or eliminated their diabetes medications within six months⁶.

4. Loss of that pesky gut: not all fat is created equal and the fat that is stored in your abdomen, known as visceral fat, is the most dangerous. Visceral fat is associated with inflammation and insulin resistance. The Ketogenic diet is effective at reducing this harmful fat⁷.

5. Cardiac benefits: a study conducted in 2018 found that patients, with type 2 diabetes, improved many of their biomarkers of cardiovascular disease risk after 1 year on a Ketogenic diet⁸. Further, there were significant changes seen in inflammation and blood pressure⁸.

I TRAVEL A LOT AND OFTEN HAVE TO EAT OUT, IS THAT A PROBLEM?

The Ketogenic diet is a way of life and can easily fit in with your busy schedule, whether it is eating out, traveling or just on the go.

It is very easy to eat at restaurants while on this program. At Keyto, we will teach you what you need to know to make the right choices when dining out and provide you with an eating out guide so you feel comfortable no matter where you find yourself.

CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT A HEALTHY KETO RECIPE WOULD LOOK LIKE?

Check out this simple, delicious and keto-friendly recipe:

FAT HEAD PIZZA

Ingredients	Instructions
<p>The Crust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1/2 cups shredded mozzarella• 3/4 cup almond flour• 2 tbsp cream cheese• 1 egg• garlic salt <p>*Topping Options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tomato sauce• Pesto• Cheese• Fresh herbs• Vegetables• Olives• Pepperoni• Sausage• Chicken...	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Place mozzarella and cream cheese in medium size microwaveable bowl.2. Microwave for 1 minute, stir and then microwave for another 30 seconds.3. Stir in egg and almond flour4. Wet hands and spread the dough on parchment paper5. Poke rows of holes to avoid bubbling.6. Sprinkle garlic salt7. Put in oven at 425 degrees8. After 8 minutes, check and poke more holes in necessary.9. Cook for another 12-14 minutes or until golden brown.10. Add any toppings of your choice* <p>Retrieved from https://www.ditchthecarbs.com/fat-head-pizza/</p>

To learn more about the Keyto Center, visit keyto.ca or [click here](#) to book an appointment.

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I AM ON MEDICATIONS, IS THIS DIET SAFE FOR ME?

Our program is run by a team of health professionals, including physicians. If any adjustments are necessary, one of our physicians will meet with you to ensure you are taking the right doses.

Many patients who follow a program like this are successful in helping to treat their diabetes, and as a result, are able to reduce or stop taking most, if not all of their medications, including insulin.





HEALTHY FOOD SWAPS

By Andrea Stokes, RD, Definitions

When it comes to eating healthy, small changes can add up to offer huge health benefits. These minor tweaks have the added bonus of being easy to implement, as they don't require any drastic diet changes.

No diet is 100% healthy at all times, but don't underestimate the power of being just that little bit healthier. Start with small changes and then build on them to help optimize your nutritional health in a more realistic way that fits your life.

Healthy Food Swaps

Sour Cream	Plain Greek Yogurt More protein, less fat, contains active cultures than can aid in digestion, source of calcium and vitamin D
Sugar	Unsweetened Applesauce Nutritious source of sweetness for baked goods
Fruit Juice	Whole Fruit More fibre, more filling, less concentrated source of sugar
Ketchup	Tomato Paste Less sugar and salt, great source of lycopene
Soda/Pop	Soda water (add lime + cucumber + mint) Flavourful and bubbly without the sugar or artificial sweeteners
Pasta	Spaghetti Squash Serving of veggies, less processed source of carbs, fewer kcals, plenty of antioxidants
Croutons	Walnuts or Slivered Almonds Adds healthy fats and fibre to salads and casseroles
Breadcrumbs	Rolled Oats Adds fibre and wholegrains to meatballs, meatloaf, and breaded toppings
Mayo	Plain Greek Yogurt Great for pasta, potato, or tuna salads. Mix 1/2 and 1/2 with mayo for same taste but less fat and more protein Mashed Avocado Higher in fibre, healthier fats, no cholesterol, less sodium
Candy, Popsicles	Frozen Grapes Great texture and sweetness with more fibre and antioxidants and less refined sugars
Regular Peanut Butter	Natural Peanut Butter Less sugar, salt, and no trans fats
Mashed Potato	Mashed Cauliflower Or mix 1/2 and 1/2 for a more nutritious vegetable side dish
Tortilla Chips	Low Sodium Triscuits More fibre, less sodium, and less fat. Great for dips, appetizers, or for nachos
Potato Chips	Plain or Lightly Seasoned Popcorn Less salt, fat, and much lower in calories
Pancake Mix	Greek Yogurt Pancakes Combine yogurt, whole wheat flour, egg, and baking soda to make low-sugar, high-protein, and high-calcium pancakes
Frozen or Takeout Pizza	Homemade Pita or Naan Bread Pizza Use whole wheat pitas or naan bread and load up with more veggies than processed versions
Creamy Salad Dressings	Greek Yogurt-Based Dressings Lower in calories and unhealthy fats, and often fewer preservatives
Store-Bought Salad Dressings	Homemade Salad Dressings A simple mix of olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and seasonings offers healthy fats and no mystery ingredients
Bagels	Whole Grain Bread Large bagels can be the equivalent of 5 slices of bread; keep portions in check by choosing bread or mini bagels instead

THE SKINNY ON YOGURT: 4 MYTHS DEBUNKED

By Jessica Tong, RD, Medisys Vancouver



According to the Canadian Dairy Commission, average yogurt consumption has increased by 43.7% over the past ten years. Functional and fortified yogurt remains one of the most dynamic dairy segments in Canada due to consumers' growing demand for ingredients such as probiotics.

Yogurt can be an excellent source of nutrients including B vitamins, protein and calcium, and should be a part of a healthy, well-balanced diet. Researchers found that consuming yogurt is associated with a lower risk of hypertension, diabetes and heart disease.

Yogurts are often on the top of grocery lists, but be careful, not all yogurts are healthful. To keep driving growth, marketers are always creating new flavours or highlighting some key "healthy" properties like low and no fat yogurts or high protein yogurts. Let's debunk the common myths about yogurt.

LOOKING TO CUT SUGAR?

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30-DAY NO
REFINED SUGAR CHALLENGE

today to receive daily tasks, sugar-free recipes, trivia, and encouraging tips from Jessica Tong to help you ditch refined sugar for 30 days.

MYTH #1: VANILLA YOGURT IS HEALTHIER THAN FRUIT-FLAVOURED OR FRUIT-ON-THE-BOTTOM YOGURT.

Truth: Both fruit-flavoured yogurts and vanilla yogurt contain a LOT more sugar and refined carbohydrates than plain yogurt. Vanilla yogurt contains more than THREE times the sugar and carbohydrates of plain yogurt. Specifically, a 1/2 cup serving of vanilla yogurt contains up to 6 sugar cubes worth of sugar! When considering yogurt - opt for plain and then you can add your own chopped fruit if desired.

MYTH #2: ONCE YOGURT GOES PAST ITS BEST BEFORE DATE, IT'S GONE BAD.

Truth: Many foods can be eaten days or sometimes even weeks after the "best before" date, as this date indicates the threshold at which the food will contain the freshness, taste, and nutrition value that it was intended to. Always inspect whether or not the food looks or smells spoiled regardless of the date stamp. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency indicates that you can eat food past the best before date, but recommends not eating food past the expiration date.

MYTH #3: ALL YOGURTS CONTAIN PROBIOTICS.

Truth: All yogurts are created from the live starter bacteria, *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*. However, in many countries where yogurt is produced including the United States, yogurt can be heat-treated after fermentation, thereby killing the live cultures used to create it. When there are no live microorganisms in yogurt, it would not contain any probiotics. In the case of probiotic yogurts, additional probiotic strains are added for their health benefits, such as preventing antibiotic-associated diarrhea, managing Irritable Bowel Syndrome symptoms, relieving constipation, and even improving mental health. When trying to determine which probiotic strain is right for you, know that there are hundreds of different strains with various benefits.

MYTH #4: 0% OR "FAT FREE" YOGURT IS HEALTHIER THAN 2% MILK-FAT YOGURT.

Truth: Fats are friends. We need fats for satiety and fats also taste good. Some recent studies even show that choosing higher fat dairy products is associated with better health outcomes. Moreover, the calorie difference between one serving of 0% and 2% MF yogurt is only 20 calories, but you get a much creamier texture. So just look for a plain yogurt that you like, whether it's fat free or has a little fat.

Navigating the yogurt aisle can be overwhelming. Here are our top yogurt aisle shopping tips:

- "Sugar Free" or "Reduced Sugar" doesn't always mean it's good - often flavoured yogurts marketed as being lower in sugar contain artificial sweeteners. Take a peek at the label and skip anything containing sucralose, aspartame, or acesulfame-potassium. Most plain yogurts don't contain added sugars or artificial sweeteners.

- The thick texture and tart flavour of plain Greek yogurt lends itself to replacing sour cream and mayo in recipes (think tacos with a dollop of Greek yogurt on top!).

- Try Skyr! It is an Icelandic cultured dairy product. Compared to Greek yogurt, Skyr is thicker and has a milder, slightly sweeter flavour. Its luxurious texture makes a great replacement for cr me fraiche. Skyr also has more protein per serving than Greek yogurt! Even Skyr flavoured yogurt is lower in sugar than leading flavoured yogurt brands.

- Try Kefir! Kefir is a fermented milk beverage - almost like pourable yogurt. Its protein content is not as high as Greek yogurt, but it works well in porridge, with cereal, or in smoothies. The greatest benefit is that kefir contains probiotics, which support gut health and immune function. Look for kefir that is low in added sugar.

Ready to put your health first? Receive recommendations and practical advice from our registered dietitians to help you reach your goals. [Click here](#) to learn more about our nutrition services.

Interested in learning more about how to achieve a healthy and balanced diet?

Download the Medisys Healthy Eating Guide!



Discover easy strategies for healthy eating, every day. Topics covered include:

- 12 Common Nutrition Myths Debunked
- Mindful Eating in Five Easy Steps
- Eating Healthy On-the-Go
- 7 Super Healthy Foods to Add to Your Grocery List
- How to Eat a Rainbow
- The Importance of Breakfast, Everyday!
- 8 Strategies to Get Rid of Processed Food
- Quick, Easy and Healthy Lunch Ideas

