

KETOGENIC DIET

2012

The ketogenic diet is a special diet for patients with epilepsy. It is used for patients who cannot control their seizures with medication alone. This diet may be recommended by your doctor if you have tried 2-3 medications without success.

Studies have shown 50-75% of children with difficult to control seizures are helped by this diet. At least 1/3 of the children treated have shown 90% or more seizure control, many becoming seizure free. There is no way to predict if the diet will be successful.

This diet is not for everyone, it requires a lot of commitment and work. Talk to your doctor and dietitian to decide if it's a good option for you.

The Diet: It is still unclear how the diet works to stop seizures. The diet is mostly made up of fat. This means foods like butter, oil, and heavy cream. The dietitian will watch you carefully to make sure you do not gain weight. Very little amounts of other food items will be given. This will make the body burn fat to use as fuel. It is a process called ketosis. Making sure the body uses fat as fuel is very important. If you cheat while on the diet, you could experience a seizure.

The diet will be started in a hospital. You will be taught everything you need to know to continue the diet at home. We ask for at least a 3 month promise if you choose to try this diet. Seizure improvement is sometimes seen right away, but usually takes up to 10 weeks. The diet will slowly be stopped after two years. The hope is that you are permanently seizure free.

What you need to do: The diet requires a lot of work on your part. Every food item needs to be weighed out. Your dietitian will provide you with a meal plan. Ketone levels must be checked daily. This can be done by putting a drop of urine on a test strip. You will also have to check your blood sugar 2 times a day for 3 days. You will be given everything you need to do these two tests.

Risks: As with any medical treatment, there are risks to the Ketogenic Diet. The ketogenic diet is high in fat, so it may raise your cholesterol. The diet may also make you more likely to have a kidney stone. If you see blood or dots in your urine, please call your doctor. If your diet is too low in carbohydrates, or you skip a meal, you are at risk for low blood sugar. If you feel shaky, throw up, or feel like your heart is beating very fast, drink ½ cup of juice immediately and then *please* call your doctor. Rarely, following the Ketogenic diet has caused a patient to become allergic to eggs. If you experience sudden swelling, itchiness, or difficulty breathing, please go to the emergency room.

For more information:

www.charliefoundation.org

www.epilepsyfoundation.org