5 Things I've Learned About Keto

When I started following a ketogenic therapy food plan in 2023 I was testing it out for our planned research study, because at CMHRC we never ask a family to do something we haven't tried ourselves. I had certain expectations that it would be complicated, restrictive, and hard to stick to. Not only didn't I know whether or not I'd see any benefit, I also didn't know what areas to even track for improvement.

But keto surprised me in many ways. After a few weeks in ketosis I was sleeping more soundly, feeling more rested, and waking up fewer times in the night. The worries that would keep me up quieted and felt manageable. The perimenopause symptoms my friends were complaining about, like hair loss, hot flashes, weight gain, and mood swings weren't bothering me. This is why, three years later, I still follow a ketogenic food plan and have no intention of stopping.

It can feel intimidating at first, but once you're going, that overwhelm goes away and you feel like a master. Here are five things I've learned through my process that I would have wanted to know at the beginning.

1. The food doesn't have to be hard

The biggest trap of ketogenic therapy is overcomplicating the food. You don't need a different recipe every night, a pantry full of specialty ingredients, or gourmet skills. Find a handful of meals you truly enjoy (ones that keep you in ketosis and leave you satisfied) and come back to them again and again. Repetition isn't boring; it's what makes this sustainable.

And simple really is fine. Some of my go-to "meals" are almost embarrassingly basic: scrambled eggs with avocado slices and sausage links; a handful of nuts and a couple of tablespoons of cream cheese with a little *Everything But the Bagel* seasoning on top; Greek yogurt mixed with heavy cream and vanilla extract. Each takes only minutes to prepare. If you *want* to make elaborate recipes and clever carb replacements, go for it; they can be fun. But they're a choice, not a requirement. The people who succeed aren't the ones with the fanciest meal plans, they're the ones who made it easy enough to keep doing.

2. Your tastes change

If you're early on and bracing yourself for a lifetime of missing bread and sugar… Don't. This is one of the things people don't believe until they experience it, but the truth is, if you stick it out through the transition phase, the cravings just fade. Once your body becomes fat-adapted, the foods that used to feel irresistible simply stop calling to you the way they did. I found that I wasn't white-knuckling it past the sourdough, pasta, and holiday cookies forever. It sounds hard to believe, but you really do reach a point where you genuinely don't *want* those things anymore. Now, I look at a plate of carbs and think to myself, "That right there is at least two nights of sleep lost." It's easy to say no to it at that point. The feeling of being deprived you fear

at the start is temporary. Give it time, and your tastes will come around, which is exactly why this becomes something you can live with for good.

3. Reading food labels is a must

Sneaky carbs are everywhere! The food industry is always rolling out something new to sell you. "Low-carb," "keto-friendly," “keto certified,” and "natural" on the front of a package mean very little. The real story is on the back. Learning to read the ingredient list and the nutrition panel (not just the marketing) is what lets you figure out what actually works for *you*. It takes a few extra seconds in the store, but it's the single most useful skill and it supports my success.

4. Food is Fuel

This idea changed how I think about everything I eat on ketogenic therapy. When we treat food as a reward or an indulgence, we deepen our emotional dependence on exactly the foods that are hardest on our health: carbohydrates. Nutrition research shows us that carbohydrates aren't something you simply "like." They create actual dependence. When you eat them, you crave them, you reach for them, and the cycle keeps going.

Reframing food as *fuel*, the thing my brain and body need to run well, quietly takes the emotional charge out of redesigning your food plan. Food stops being a reward to earn or a comfort to lean on, and that shift is a big part of what freed me to embrace keto.

5. It's a lifestyle, not a diet

A diet is something you struggle through, feel deprived on, and eventually quit. Ketogenic therapy isn't a diet. It's not about restriction or deprivation, it's about choosing long-term health and well-being over the quick hit of something that tastes good right now but costs me later. Seeing it as a lifestyle, rather than a diet I'm "on," is what makes the choice to follow ketogenic therapy feel like freedom instead of sacrifice.

Have a keto question or a tip that's worked for you? We'd love to hear it! Reply and let us know.