

Atkins and Ketosis

The basic principle of the Atkins diet is that a state of ketosis will help you burn your fat stores as energy. Many people, even those who are on low carbohydrate diets, don't quite understand ketosis and why it works.

Most diets are calorie-reduction diets. They help you lose weight, but some of the weight is from fat and some of it is from lean muscle tissue. While you may look smaller on the scale, your metabolism is actually slowing down. The more muscle you lose the slower your metabolism will be. This makes losing weight more difficult and gaining weight back even simpler.

The Atkins diet, on the other hand, is carbohydrate restrictive. It creates a state of ketosis in your body that burns only fat, and not muscle. The primary source of your energy for your body will be fat in the form of ketones. Your liver will convert fat into ketones and it cannot be converted back. It will be excreted naturally.

Ketones are actually a normally and efficient source of fuel for the human body. They are created in the liver from the fatty acids that result from the breakdown of body fat. These only appear when there is an absence of glucose and sugar. In the Atkins diet, you reduce the amount of glucose and sugar that is in the bloodstream. As a result, your body produces ketones for fuel. When your body is creating ketones it is called ketosis.

There is a common misconception that following a ketogenic diet like Atkins is dangerous. The truth is that being in ketosis is a completely naturally state. The human body creates ketones to use as fuel in the absence of glucose.

In the Atkins diet book, Dr. Atkins suggests using ketone-testing strips to determine your state of ketosis during dieting. These small plastic strips are held in the urine stream and contain a special chemically treated absorptive pad. This pad will change color if ketones are present in the urine. With the presence of ketones, the strip will change varying shades of pink to purple. There is a color scale on the label of the bottle that will help you determine your ketone levels.

Ketone strips are available in any pharmacy and can be found among the diabetic supplies. In some stores, they are kept behind the counter so you may have to ask for them. You won't need a prescription to buy them though. Once you open a package of ketosis strips they have a shelf life of 6 months. It may be helpful to mark the opening date on the box.

Ketone strips will let you know if you are progressing correctly on the Atkins

diet. If you are following the Induction plan to the letter and aren't seeing purple, don't worry. Some people never show trace amounts of ketones or they may show just above the minimum line. As long as you are losing weight and inches then you are successfully using ketones. Also, if you've just exercised a few hours before using the strips, you may not see purple.

Some dieters may mistakenly believe that a dark purple result on the testing strips means that they are losing weight faster. Actually, the darkest purple color is a sign of dehydration. It means that your urine is too concentrated and you need to drink water.

Ketones come from fat in the bloodstream, whether it is fat that you eat or fat that you burn. So if you eat a meal heavy in fat and then immediately use a testing strip, then you'll see a dark purple result. Use the strips as a guide, but don't get hung up on the color.

Reaching a state of ketosis is key to success on the Atkins diet and it as simple as eliminating carbohydrates from the diet. Make sure to follow the eating plan correctly and use the ketone testing strips as needed.

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