

CONQUERING “KETO FLU”

By Mary T. Newport, M.D. – April 2019

While adopting a low carbohydrate ketogenic lifestyle can have very positive health benefits, transitioning abruptly from a high carb to a low carb diet can be a challenge. The process of making this transition is called “keto-adaptation”. Basically, while shifting from burning mainly glucose to burning fat, your metabolism will undergo very significant changes. Our metabolism is very complex and involves hundreds, if not thousands, of chemical reactions some of which may require different enzymes to operate efficiently depending on whether the metabolism is driven by glucose or by fatty acids and ketones. This process can take time to get up to full speed, and many people, but not all, develop symptoms that have been called the “keto flu” (not a true influenza infection) that can last for several days to several weeks.

There are several reasons why this happens. At the beginning of changing over to a low carb, low calorie diet to lose weight, we tend to lose quite a bit of water and the water takes with it important minerals like sodium, potassium, calcium and magnesium. If this fluid is not replaced, it is possible to become dehydrated. Also, blood glucose and insulin levels tend to drop which can cause symptoms as well. For these reasons it is important for people who are elderly or have medical conditions to work with their doctor when abruptly changing the diet.

The symptoms of keto flu can include fatigue and lethargy, dizziness or light-headedness, trouble focusing, brain fog, headaches, sugar cravings, muscle cramping, irritability, difficulty sleeping, red blotches, rashes, or upset stomach with nausea and diarrhea.

People starting a new diet to lose fat usually hope for quick results, however, one way to try to avoid keto flu is to cut down gradually on carbs instead of going overnight from a high carb to a very low carb diet. Although the results may be slower, there is less chance that keto flu will cause you to abandon the diet altogether. You could start by eliminating obvious sugary drinks, fruits juices and sweets, begin to increase the fats and oils in the diet and eat smaller portions of grains and starchy vegetables (like potatoes and corn) and limit legumes to small portions. Then begin to reduce calories and count carbs, perhaps aiming initially for 50 grams or less per day and then decrease by 5 gram increments every few days to week. A strict ketogenic diet could ultimately go as low as 15 to 20 grams of carbs per day, mainly as non-starchy vegetables and possibly a few berries or nuts.

Some other things you can do to conquer “keto flu” are:

- Stay well hydrated – drink plenty of water aiming for at least 10 x 8 ounce glasses per day.
- Replace sodium and other minerals - try bouillon broth or bone broth, coconut water or a sugar free drink with electrolytes; sprinkle sea salt on foods or take an electrolyte supplement, such as Pruvit MitoPlex.

- Temporarily increase total carbs (like whole grains, not sugar!!) by 5 or 10 grams per day and/or increase total calories.
- If you have been a couch potato, introduce exercise gradually.
- Taking ketone salts, such as Pruvit Keto//OS or Keto Nat or Keto-Up or 5 to 10 grams BHB as ketone ester once or twice a day, can help get ketone levels higher faster and, at the same time, replace sodium, potassium, magnesium and calcium that may otherwise be lost while on a ketogenic diet.
- Using MCT//143, coconut and/or MCT oil with each meal 3 or 4 times per day can help achieve and maintain at least mild nutritional ketosis.

Most people get through the keto-flu in a few days to 2 or 3 weeks. If you adhere to the ketogenic diet, full keto-adaptation can occur in six to eight weeks.

Pruvit Products are available at marynewport.shopketo.com.