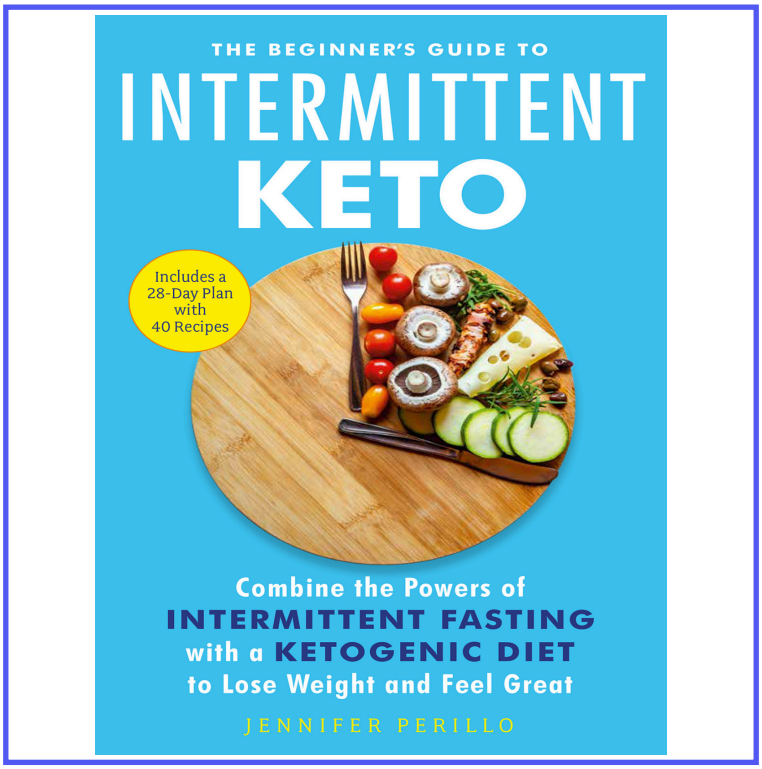


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Contents

Cover

Title Page

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PART I

AN INTRODUCTION TO INTERMITTENT FASTING AND THE KETO DIET

- Making a Change for Better Health

PART II

MEAL PLANS AND RECIPES

- Ready, Set, Go: 4-Week Plans & Recipes
  - Meal Plans
  - Recipes

PART III

RESOURCES

About the Author

Newsletters

PART I

AN INTRODUCTION TO INTERMITTENT FASTING AND THE KETO DIET

MAKING A CHANGE FOR BETTER HEALTH

We are what we eat. Sounds like a simple, straightforward statement, right? Let's take it one step further, though, and consider *how* we eat. Chances are you're looking to make a change if you're reading this book. Maybe the goal is weight loss, trying to lose those last stubborn ten pounds. Perhaps you're exploring changing your diet for preventive measures to put yourself on a better health track for the future.

Intermittent fasting and ketosis, also referred to as IF and Keto, are probably familiar or at least recognizable terms, since you bought this book in the first place. Unlike fad diets, where you might see fast results that are hard to maintain long term, both intermittent fasting and keto target the root systems of how you consume food and the choices you make with each meal. Implemented properly, intermittent fasting and keto are lifestyle changes, and long-term solutions for a healthier, happier you.

Today's availability of information means everything we want to know about anything is at our fingertips, or with a swipe of one. That same convenience can often leave you with an overload of information. How do you decipher it all and determine if intermittent fasting and keto are right for you? That's the goal of this book. I did a deep dive into both lifestyles and analyzed the benefits of both practices—implemented on their own and combined—so you can cut straight to the chase and get started on your intermittent keto journey.

Before you set out making changes, approach this as you would any recipe—read the directions from beginning to end first. Make sure you

understand not just how to do intermittent fasting and cook keto-friendly meals but the science behind it all. Reading all the introductory material will make the transition to this new lifestyle easier and help you see the 4-Week Plan through to completion. Tempting as it might be to skip straight to the 4-Week Plan and recipes, keep in mind that a solid foundation is the key to success. The words between this introduction and the recipes provide the bricks and mortar to build a solid start.

Be prepared for the naysayers. We'll talk about this more in the Before You Get Started section here. Everyone is an expert nowadays, ready to share their opinions whether welcome or not. Remember only YOU are an expert on you. One you've read through the following sections, you'll know if intermittent keto is right for you. Of course, if you have any underlying health concerns, always consult a medical practitioner before making any changes to your diet and lifestyle.

WHAT IS KETOSIS?

On the surface, carbohydrates are a quick, often fast and inexpensive form of nutrition to power through each day. Think about all those grab-and-go snacks we associate with breakfast—granola bars, fruit-filled smoothies, muffins. We start our mornings with carbs, and we keep piling them on as the day progresses.

Just because something works doesn't mean it's the most efficient means. The tissues and cells that make up our bodies need energy to perform everyday functions to keep us alive. There are two primary sources from which they can draw energy from the foods we eat. One form of energy is carbohydrates, which convert to glucose. That is the current model that most of us follow. There's an alternative fuel, though, and a surprising one: fat. Yes, the very thing you've been told to limit your entire life might just be the resource you need to jump-start your metabolism. Organic compounds, called ketones, are released when our bodies metabolize food and break down fatty acids. Ketones act as energy to keep our cells and muscles functioning.

You've likely heard the word "metabolism" throughout your life, but do you know what it means exactly? The term simply refers to the chemical

reactions required in any living organism to stay alive. Of course, our metabolism is anything but simple given the complexities of the human body. Our bodies are constantly at work. Even when we're sleeping, our cells are continually building and repairing. They need to extract the energy from within our bodies.

Glucose, which is what carbs are broken down into once we eat them, is one way to fuel our metabolism. Our current nutrition guidelines focus on carbs as the primary source of energy. Factor in any additional sugars we eat and the recommended daily servings of fruit, starchy vegetables, grains, and plant-based forms of protein (e.g., beans), and there's no lack of glucose in our bodies. The problem with this model of energy consumption is that it leaves us like hamsters running on one of those wheels. We're burning energy but getting nowhere, especially if we're consuming more carbs than our bodies can use in a day's work.

But there's that other form of energy I mentioned: fat. How does that work exactly? Is it possible that tapping into that alternative fuel source will help our bodies burn energy more efficiently, with greater overall benefit to our health? We're back to that old idea of you are what you eat, except now think about the principal theory instead as you *burn* what you eat. That's where ketosis comes into play. Switching to a high-fat, moderate-protein, low-carb diet allows your body to enter a state of ketosis, wherein you metabolize fat, triggering a release of ketones to fuel the functions of our elaborate inner workings. The liver releases ketones after fatty acids are broken down.

Achieving a state of ketosis is about balance, but not the kind you're used to when it comes to eating. It turns out that our current food pyramid, which instructs us to consume an inordinate amount of carbohydrate-rich foods for energy, is upside down. A more efficient plan for fueling your body has fats at the top, making up 60 to 80 percent of your diet; protein in the middle at 20 to 30 percent; and carbs (really glucose in disguise) way at the bottom, accounting for just 5 to 10 percent of your daily eating plan.

KETO VS. PALEO

Evolution offers us many benefits. The ability to use fire and electricity to

cook our food is proof alone that progress can be a good thing. Somewhere between our hunter-gatherer foraging lifestyle and today's modern world, a big disconnect happened. Sure, we have longer life spans now, but what about the quality of those extra years from a health perspective? The sluggish feeling that never seems to go away may be not just because you need to get extra sleep (though sleep is always a good thing!).

If food is fuel for our bodies, then it's safe to say that what we eat has an impact on our productivity. Put diesel in a car designed to run on gasoline and the effects are disastrous. Is it possible our bodies are in a similar state today, the result of our systems' having evolved to rely on carbs for energy as food became more reliably available, instead of fat, as in our early days of existence? I realize this sounds an awful lot like advocating for a paleo diet, but while the ketogenic lifestyle looks similar, the underlying principle to keto is vastly different. Keto is about creating a synergy between what you eat and the way your body functions—that's why the focus is on a specific manipulation of macronutrients (fat, protein, carbohydrates, fiber, and fluids). Every calorie is made up of specific macronutrients. Understanding why you're making such specific food choices is key to comprehending the bigger picture.

Fiber, for example, keeps us regular because it helps food pass through the digestive system. What goes in must come out, and fiber is essential to that process. Protein aids in tissue repair, producing enzymes and building bones, muscles, and skin. Fluids keep us hydrated—without them, our cells, tissues, and organs cannot function properly. Carbohydrates' primary role is to provide energy, but to do so, the body must convert them into glucose, which has a ripple effect throughout the rest of the body. Carb consumption is a delicate balance for people with diabetes because of its relationship to insulin production from increased blood sugar levels. Healthy fats support cell growth, protect our organs, help keep us warm, and have the ability to provide energy, but only when carbohydrates are consumed in limited quantities. I'll explain more about why and how that happens shortly.

CARBS VS. NET CARBS

Carbohydrates exist in some form in almost every food source. Total

elimination of carbs is impossible and impractical. We need some carbohydrates to function. It's important to know this if we want to understand why some foods that fall into the restricted category on a keto diet are better choices than others.

Fiber counts as a carb in the nutritional breakdown of a meal. What's important to note is that fiber does not significantly affect our blood sugar—a good thing, since it's an essential macronutrient that helps us digest food properly. By subtracting the amount of fiber from the number of carbs in the nutritional tally of an ingredient or finished recipe, you're left with what's called net carbs.

Think about your paycheck before taxes (gross), and after (net). A terrible analogy, perhaps, since no one enjoys paying taxes, but an effective one in trying to understand carbs versus net carbs and how to track them. You put a certain number of carbs into your body, but not all of them affect your blood sugar level.

This doesn't mean you can go crazy with whole-grain pasta. Even though it's a better choice than white-flour pasta, overall, you should be limiting your net carbs to 20 to 25 grams per day. To put that in perspective: two ounces of uncooked whole-grain pasta have about 35 grams of carbohydrates and only 7 grams of total fiber. Probably pasta and bread are the two main things that people will ask you if you miss. Best way to answer them is by sharing all the things you *can* eat (see the Keto Cheat Sheet here).

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR KETOSIS TO KICK IN?

Most people transition into ketosis within one to three days. It can take some people a full week, as all bodies are different. Factors that affect how quickly you enter ketosis include your current body weight, diet, and activity level.

In order to enter ketosis, your body needs to first burn through its glycogen (glucose) supply. Once the glycogens are depleted, your body signals it's time to start breaking down those fatty acids. During the next few days, the liver gets the message to begin excreting ketones. This last part of the process signals that you're in ketosis. The early stage is a mild

ketosis, as ketone levels will be relatively low until you maintain ketosis for a steady period of time. You can measure ketone levels formally (see here), but you might start to notice some physiological changes that show you're in ketosis, such as keto flu or keto breath. They are not as severe or dramatic as they sound, and the benefits of ketosis might outweigh the downside in this phase-in period toward your defined goals, but it's good to familiarize yourself with the symptoms nonetheless (see here and here).

INTERMITTENT FASTING: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

When you say the phrase "Today I will fast," what is the first thing that comes to mind? Let me guess—is it "But I don't want to starve"? You're not alone in this common misconception, so let's break it down and make it easier to digest (pun very much intended!).

Fasting vs. Starvation

Fasting is a conscious choice. What sets fasting apart from starvation is that it's a decision you make to intentionally not eat. The length of time you choose to fast and the purpose for fasting (be it for religious reasons, weight loss, or a detox) are not forced upon you. Fasting is done at will. Done properly, fasting can have positive effects on our overall health.

Starvation is brought upon people unwillingly by a set of circumstances out of their control, famine, poverty, and war being just a few reasons for such a catastrophic situation. Starvation is a severe deficiency in calories that can lead to organ damage and eventually death. No one chooses to starve.

Once I thought about not eating from this perspective, it made perfect sense, and it was so much easier to wrap my head around the idea. Yes, at first I was skeptical about fasting too. Before I understood that there is a difference between fasting and starving, my first reaction to the idea of not eating was always "Why would anyone choose to starve?" The reality is, anyone who decides to fast is only choosing not to eat for a predetermined period of time. Even peaceful protests that use fasting as a means to an end have a defined goal for fasting.