



THE CARNIVORE DIET

The Carnivore Diet consists entirely of meat and animal products, excluding all other foods. It's claimed to aid weight loss, mood issues, and blood sugar regulation, among other health issues.

However, the diet is extremely restrictive and likely unhealthy in the long term. Plus, no research backs its purported benefits.

The Carnivore Diet eliminates all foods except meat and animal products. Thus, it's lacking in numerous nutrients like fibre, loaded with salt and fat, and difficult to maintain. You should follow a well-rounded diet instead.

WHAT IS THE CARNIVORE DIET?

The Carnivore Diet is a restrictive diet that only includes meat, fish, and other animal foods like eggs and certain dairy products. It excludes all other foods, including fruits, vegetables, legumes, grains, nuts, and seeds.

Its proponents also recommend eliminating or limiting dairy intake to foods that are low in lactose — a sugar found in milk and dairy products — such as butter and hard cheeses. The Carnivore Diet stems from the controversial belief that human ancestral populations ate mostly meat and fish and that high-carb diets are to blame for today's high rates of chronic disease.

Other popular low-carb diets, like the keto and paleo diets, limit but don't exclude carb intake. However, the Carnivore Diet aims for zero carbs.

Some people state that the Carnivore Diet can treat depression, anxiety, arthritis, obesity, diabetes, and more. However, no research has analysed the effects of the Carnivore Diet.

HOW TO FOLLOW THE CARNIVORE DIET

Following the diet involves eliminating all plant foods from your diet and exclusively eating meat, fish, eggs, and small amounts of low-lactose dairy products.

Foods to eat include beef, chicken, pork, lamb, turkey, organ meats, salmon, sardines, white fish, and small amounts of heavy cream and hard cheese. Butter, lard, and bone marrow are also allowed.

Proponents of the diet emphasize eating fatty cuts of meat to reach your daily energy needs. The

Carnivore Diet encourages drinking water and bone broth but discourages drinking tea, coffee, and other drinks made from plants.

It provides no specific guidelines regarding calorie intake, serving sizes, or how many meals or snacks to eat per day. Most proponents of the diet suggest eating as often as you desire.

BENEFITS OF THE CARNIVORE DIET

Since the Carnivore Diet excludes carbs, it eliminates cookies, cakes, sweets, fizzy drinks, pastries, and similar high-carb foods.

These foods are low in beneficial nutrients and often high in calories. Thus, they should be limited in a healthy, balanced diet.

High-sugar foods can also be problematic for people with diabetes, as they can spike blood sugar levels. In fact, limiting refined carbs and sugary foods is often recommended to control diabetes. However, the complete elimination of carbs on the Carnivore Diet is not recommended or necessary for diabetes management. Instead, eating smaller amounts of wholesome, high-fibre carbs that don't cause spikes in blood sugar is recommended.

IT CAN POTENTIALLY HELP YOU TO LOSE WEIGHT

Certain aspects of the Carnivore Diet may lead to weight loss. Specifically, some studies have shown that high-protein and low-carb diets can promote weight loss. This is mostly because protein can help you feel fuller after meals, which may lead to reduced calorie intake and subsequent weight loss. Protein can also increase your metabolic rate, helping you burn more calories.

Therefore, following the Carnivore Diet would likely cause you to feel fuller and eat fewer calories overall — at least in the short term.

Some studies show that increasing protein intake and reducing carb intake may lead to more sustained weight loss than diets that are lower in protein and higher in carbs. However, you do not need to eliminate carbs to lose weight. Rather, reducing your overall calorie intake, which may be easier to do with a higher intake of satisfying protein, is the main driver of weight loss.

Plus, the highly restrictive nature of the Carnivore Diet makes it difficult to follow long term.



DOWNSIDERS OF THE CARNIVORE DIET

Due to its highly restrictive nature and complete elimination of most food groups, there are many downsides to the Carnivore Diet.

HIGH IN FAT, CHOLESTEROL, AND SODIUM

Given that the Carnivore Diet consists solely of animal foods, it can be high in saturated fat and cholesterol.

Saturated fat may raise your LDL (bad) cholesterol, which may increase your risk of heart disease. However, recent studies have shown that high intakes of saturated fat and cholesterol are not strongly linked to a higher risk of heart disease, as was previously believed.

Still, consuming high amounts of saturated fat on the Carnivore Diet may be of concern. No research has analysed the effects of eating animal foods exclusively. Therefore, the effects of consuming such high levels of fat and cholesterol are unknown.

Some processed meats, especially bacon and breakfast meats, also contain high amounts of sodium.

Eating a lot of these foods on the Carnivore Diet can lead to excessive sodium intake, which has been linked to an increased risk of high blood pressure, kidney disease, and other negative health outcomes. Processed meat intake has also been linked to higher rates of certain types of cancer, including colon and rectal cancer.

MAY LACK CERTAIN MICRONUTRIENTS AND BENEFICIAL PLANT COMPOUNDS

The Carnivore Diet eliminates highly nutritious foods like fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains, all of which contain beneficial vitamins and minerals.

While meat is nutritious and provides micronutrients, it should not be the only part of your diet. Following a restrictive diet like the Carnivore Diet may lead to deficiencies in some nutrients and the overconsumption of others. What's more, diets that are rich in plant-based foods have been associated with a lower risk of certain chronic conditions like heart disease, certain cancers, Alzheimer's, and type 2 diabetes. This is not only due to the high vitamin, fibre, and mineral contents of plant foods but also their beneficial

plant compounds and antioxidants.

The Carnivore Diet does not contain these compounds and has not been associated with any long-term health benefits.

DOES NOT PROVIDE FIBRE

Fibre, a non-digestible carb that promotes gut health and healthy bowel movements, is only found in plant foods. Thus, the Carnivore Diet contains no fibre, which may lead to constipation in some people. Additionally, fibre is incredibly important for the proper balance of bacteria in your gut. In fact, suboptimal gut health can lead to a few issues and may even be linked to weakened immunity and colon cancer. In fact, one study in 17 men with obesity found that a high-protein, low-carb diet significantly decreased their levels of compounds that help protect against colon cancer, compared to high-protein, moderate-carb diets.

Overall, following the Carnivore Diet may harm your gut health.

MAY NOT BE SUITED FOR SOME POPULATIONS

The Carnivore Diet may be especially problematic for certain populations. For example, those who need to limit their protein intake, including people with chronic kidney disease, should not follow the diet. Also, those who are more sensitive to the cholesterol in foods, or cholesterol hyper-responders, should be cautious about consuming so many high-cholesterol foods.

Furthermore, certain populations with special nutrient needs would likely not meet them on the Carnivore Diet. This includes children and pregnant or lactating women. Lastly, those who have anxiety about food or struggle with restrictive eating should not try this diet.

FOODS TO EAT

The Carnivore Diet includes only animal products and excludes all other foods. Specifically, someone on the Carnivore Diet can eat:

- MEAT: beef, chicken, turkey, organ meats, lamb, pork, etc.
- FISH: salmon, mackerel, sardines, crab, lobster, tilapia, herring, etc.
- OTHER ANIMAL PRODUCTS: eggs, lard, bone marrow, bone broth, etc.
- LOW-LACTOSE DAIRY (IN SMALL AMOUNTS): heavy cream, hard cheese, butter, etc.



- WATER

According to some proponents of the diet, salt, pepper, and seasonings with no carbs are allowed.

In addition, some people choose to eat yogurt, milk, and soft cheese, but these foods are typically not included due to their carb contents.

FOODS TO AVOID

All foods that do not come from animals are excluded from the Carnivore Diet. Restricted foods include:

- VEGETABLES: broccoli, cauliflower, potatoes, green beans, peppers, etc.
- FRUITS: apples, berries, bananas, kiwi, oranges, etc.
- HIGH-LACTOSE DAIRY: milk, yogurt, soft cheese, etc.
- LEGUMES: beans, lentils, etc.
- NUTS AND SEEDS: almonds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, pistachios, etc.
- GRAINS: rice, wheat, bread, quinoa, pasta, etc.
- ALCOHOL: beer, wine, liquor, etc.
- SUGARS: table sugar, maple syrup, brown sugar, etc.
- BEVERAGES OTHER THAN WATER: fizzy drinks, coffee, tea, fruit juice, etc.

While some people incorporate some of these foods, a true Carnivore Diet does not permit them.

SAMPLE MENU FOR 5 DAYS

The Carnivore Diet is difficult to follow long term and does not offer much variety. Here's a five-day sample menu for the Carnivore Diet:

MONDAY

- BREAKFAST: eggs, bacon, sardines.
- LUNCH: turkey burger patty, salmon jerky, beef tips.
- DINNER: filet mignon, crab, chicken liver.
- SNACKS: a small amount of Parmesan cheese, jerky.

TUESDAY

- BREAKFAST: shrimp, eggs, a small glass of heavy cream.
- LUNCH: strip steak, tuna fish, beef jerky.
- DINNER: lamb chops, scallops, beef liver.
- SNACKS: a small amount of hard Cheddar cheese, bone broth.

WEDNESDAY

- BREAKFAST: eggs, salmon, turkey sausage.
- LUNCH: beef tips, pork chops, mackerel.
- DINNER: turkey burger patty, a small amount of Parmesan cheese, bone marrow.
- SNACKS: hard-boiled eggs, shrimp.

THURSDAY

- BREAKFAST: trout, shredded chicken, bacon.
- LUNCH: beef meatballs, small amount Cheddar cheese, salmon jerky.
- DINNER: crab cooked in lard, filet mignon.
- SNACKS: sardines, beef jerky.

FRIDAY

- BREAKFAST: eggs, chicken, and turkey sausage links.
- LUNCH: lamb roast, chicken liver, pork chop.
- DINNER: flank steak, scallops cooked in butter, a small glass of heavy cream.
- SNACKS: bone broth, turkey jerky.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Carnivore Diet is extremely restrictive, consisting entirely of meat, fish, eggs, and small amounts of low-lactose dairy.

It's said to aid weight loss and several health issues, but no research backs these claims.

What's more, it's high in fat and sodium, contains no fibre or beneficial plant compounds, and is difficult to maintain long term.

Overall, the Carnivore Diet is unnecessarily restrictive. Eating a balanced diet with a variety of healthy foods is more sustainable and will likely afford you more health benefits.

