

# Child Information Sheet

## The Ketogenic Diet



### ***What is the ketogenic diet?***

This is a diet used to treat epilepsy.  
Unlike most diets it is high in fat!

### ***How does the ketogenic diet work?***

When starving your body produces chemicals called ketones which provide energy. These ketones seem to stop or reduce seizures in some people. The diet copies the effect of starvation, so that you don't have to starve. You can eat !

### ***How soon will I know if the diet is working?***

Some children improve within a week while others take up to 3 months to show any benefit.

### ***How will I feel on this diet?***

Not everyone feels the same on the diet. Most feel well, but in the beginning you may feel sleepy and miserable. This improves with time. Some children become more alert and active.

### ***Will I feel hungry?***

Although the meals look small, you should not be hungry. Fatty food stays longer in the stomach and you will feel full for longer.

### ***How long will I have to be in the hospital?***

This depends .... Some children stay in hospital when they start the diet and others may start the diet at home.

### ***Can I calculate the diet myself?***

No! A special diet is worked out for you!  
A specialised dietitian calculates the diet to make sure that it is safe.  
Recipes cannot be swapped!

### ***Can I have sweets or crisps?***

No. You cannot eat anything except the food included in your diet. Your diet is especially made for you, and extras such as sweets and other snacks will stop it from working.

### ***Can I go to school?***

### ***Can I go to parties?***

### ***Can I go on holiday?***

Yes, of course! But you need to take your special food (diet) with you.

### ***What if I make a mistake and eat something else?***

If this happens the diet will stop working, ketones will be lost and you may have a seizure.

### ***Will medications (antiepileptic drugs) be stopped after I go on the diet?***

This depends.... In most children anti-epileptic medications can be reduced.  
This may take some time. (Do not change the dose of medication without asking your doctor!)

### ***If the diet seems to be working, how long will I be on it?***

This depends on how well the diet works for you and how difficult it is for you to keep to it.  
If you have no seizures for 2 years, most doctors would suggest trying to come off the diet slowly.

### ***What about the side effects of the ketogenic diet?***

Usually the diet has very few side effects.  
Some children may feel sick or vomit when starting on the diet.  
Constipation can be a problem and may need treatment.  
Kidney stones have been reported on the diet if children do not drink enough.  
Sometimes growth can be a bit slow but most children on the diet will grow normally.  
All children are carefully monitored for side effects.

### ***Will I become fat?***

No, not usually.  
But sometimes this can be a problem if too much food is given or if you are inactive.  
You should be weighed regularly.

### ***Is the diet bad for your heart?***

The diet is high in fat but this fat is changed to ketones.  
Ketones are used by the brain for energy, therefore should not increase the risk of heart disease.

### ***Does the diet require vitamin and mineral supplements?***

Yes. Your doctor and dietitian will give you these, and it is important to take them regularly as recommended.

### ***How is the diet monitored?***

You will be given a diary to complete and you will have regular urine and blood tests and follow-up visits with the dietitian and doctor (paediatrician).

### ***Remind me what are the benefits from the diet?***

Many children feel better on the diet.  
Seizures may improve, become less frequent and even stop.

### ***How difficult is the diet to manage?***

The diet is quite difficult to start.  
However with care and a basic understanding and specialist advice, it becomes routine.  
The dietitian will support and help you and your family.