

## Can cutting out carbs treat epilepsy? The ketogenic diet as a drug

The ketogenic diet has actually been used in the treatment of epilepsy since the 1920s.

It had been known that patients often had significantly fewer seizures if they lived on a very strict diet, where up to 90 per cent of calories came from fat and carbohydrate intake was less than 20 grams a day.

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This is why researchers and therapists have brought back the old diet regimen. In 2008, the journal *The Lancet Neurology* published a ground-breaking study of children whose severe epilepsy couldn't be controlled with medication.

"The study showed that the ketogenic diet had a much better effect than continuing with treatment as normal," says [nutritionist Magnhild] Kverneland.

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Dietary changes can seem mundane, because they concern food and are something we can do on our own. But it may be more appropriate to think of the ketogenic diet as a drug.

It's a treatment that has medical effects. But it can be very demanding to follow. In addition, the diet can have side effects that in the worst case can be dangerous.

For example, it is known that the ketogenic diet can cause digestive problems.

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When patients in Norway try the diet, they receive thorough guidance and follow-up.

"We take blood tests and monitor the effects and side effects," [Kverneland] said. "Some see a truly amazing effect. Then everyone is happy. But the response is different from patient to patient."

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