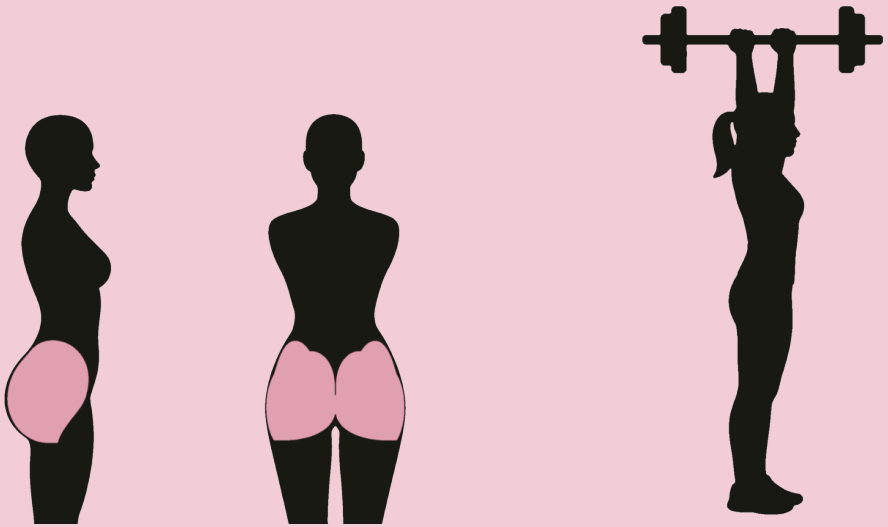
FREE GUIDE

Skinny Secrets, *Why Low Carb*

How fat became the villain, what carbs really do in your body, what the research says, and the ratio, the foods and the stores we use. The short, honest version.



A note before you start

This book is not medical advice, and I am not a doctor.

I am sharing what I have read and what has worked for my own body. It may not be right for you.

Do not change the way you eat without talking to your doctor first, especially if you take medication for diabetes or blood pressure, if you have type 1 diabetes, kidney, liver, gallbladder or heart problems, if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if you have a history of eating disorders.

Where I mention a study, I have tried to describe it fairly, including the results that do not support low carb. Where I mention a book, the arguments are the author's own, and I tell you which parts I use and which parts are not proven.

This book does not promise you a number on a scale. Take what fits your life. Leave the rest.

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Why This Little Book Exists

You do not need to believe me. You need to understand what happens in your body when you eat, and then decide for yourself.

I eat low carb because it works for my body. I sleep better, I am not hungry every two hours, my skin is calmer, and my clothes fit the way I want them to. But "it works for me" is not a reason for you to change the way you eat. A reason is understanding why.

So this is the short version of everything I have read. Three books shaped the way I eat, and a handful of big research reviews keep me honest. I put the most important ideas in one place, in plain words, so you can read it in an evening and get the idea.

This is not a diet book. There are no recipes in here and no meal plans. Those live in our cookbook. This is the why. Once the why makes sense, the how gets very easy.

What you will find inside

- How fat became the villain, and who helped it happen.
- What carbs actually do in your body, step by step.
- What the research says, the good parts and the honest limits.
- Why the kind of fat matters as much as the amount.
- The exact ratio we use, in grams, not just percentages.
- What to eat, what to keep for sometimes, and what to skip.
- Where we shop, and the products we use every week.
- Who should be careful, and your first week.

Eat fat. Lift heavy. Walk. Dance. Sleep. Repeat.

We Were Told to Fear Fat

For most of our lives, fat was the enemy. Low fat yoghurt, low fat crackers, egg white omelettes. How did that happen?

One man and one big idea

In the 1950s a Minnesota physiologist named Ancel Keys proposed what became known as the diet heart hypothesis: eating fat, especially saturated fat, raises cholesterol in the blood, and that cholesterol causes heart disease. He was brilliant, persuasive, and very famous. In 1961 he was on the cover of TIME magazine.

His most famous project, the Seven Countries Study, followed about 12,770 middle aged men in Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Finland, the Netherlands, Japan and the United States. It found that populations with higher blood cholesterol had more heart disease.

The problem with the study

The Seven Countries Study was observational. It showed that two things moved together. It could not show that one caused the other. Critics, including the journalist Nina Teicholz in The Big Fat Surprise, argue that the countries were chosen in a way that fit the hypothesis, and that countries which did not fit were left out. Later researchers have pointed out that Keys put natural saturated fat and industrial trans fat into a single number, which made it impossible to tell them apart.

Keys also has defenders. People who worked with him say his critics ignore real contributions. That is fair. But even his defenders agree on one thing: an association is not proof.

The idea becomes the rule

In 1977 a United States Senate committee led by George McGovern published the Dietary Goals for the United States. The goals told Americans to eat less fat,

less saturated fat and less cholesterol, and to eat more carbohydrates. The first edition even told people to eat less meat. Not every scientist agreed the evidence was strong enough for such specific numbers.

In 1980 the first Dietary Guidelines for Americans followed, built on those goals. From there, the low fat message went into schools, hospitals, doctors' offices and supermarket labels for the next forty years.

What filled the gap

When you take fat out of food, it tastes like cardboard. So manufacturers put something else in: sugar, starch, and refined flour. The low fat aisle was born. At the same time, butter and lard were replaced by vegetable oils and shortening. According to Teicholz, American consumption of vegetable oils rose by nearly 90 percent from 1970 onward.

We did exactly what we were told. We ate less fat and more carbs. And over the same decades, obesity and type 2 diabetes kept climbing.

> Correlation is not causation. That one sentence is the whole lesson of this chapter. It works both ways, too, so keep it in your pocket for every headline you read, including the ones that agree with me.

The Sugar Story

While fat was on trial, sugar was quietly getting a very good lawyer.

In 2016, a researcher at the University of California, San Francisco named Cristin Kearns published a paper in JAMA Internal Medicine. She had spent days in the basement of a Harvard library reading old letters, and what she found was a scandal fifty years in the making.

What the letters showed

As early as 1954, a sugar industry trade group, the Sugar Research Foundation, understood something simple: if Americans switched to low fat diets, they would eat more sugar. Then, in 1965, studies linking sugar to heart disease started getting attention.

The industry responded with a project. It paid Harvard nutrition scientists, the equivalent of about 50,000 dollars in 2016 money, to write a review of the research on sugar, fat and heart disease. The industry set the goal of the review, sent articles to include, and saw drafts before publication.

The review was published in 1967 in the New England Journal of Medicine, one of the most respected journals in the world. It played down sugar and pointed the finger at fat. The sugar funding was not disclosed.

One of the authors, Mark Hegsted, later helped shape federal nutrition policy, and he went on to lead the human nutrition unit at the US Department of Agriculture.

Why it still matters

This does not prove that fat is harmless, or that sugar alone causes heart disease. What it shows is that the science we grew up with was not as clean as we were told. Money pushed the research in one direction, and the advice followed for decades. The question was never only fat or sugar. It was also who was asking, and who was paying.

How we got here

1953	Ancel Keys proposes that dietary fat and cholesterol drive heart disease.
1954	A sugar industry group notes that low fat diets would mean more sugar eaten.
1958	The Seven Countries Study begins.
1961	Keys is on the cover of TIME magazine.
1965	Studies linking sugar and heart disease get attention. The industry starts a project.
1967	An industry funded Harvard review in the New England Journal of Medicine blames fat.
1977	The Senate Dietary Goals tell Americans to eat less fat and more carbohydrates.
1980	The first Dietary Guidelines for Americans make it official.
2014	The Big Fat Surprise questions the science behind the low fat advice.
2015	The FDA rules partially hydrogenated oils, the source of trans fat, not generally safe.
2016	The sugar industry letters are published in JAMA Internal Medicine.
2018	Manufacturers can no longer add partially hydrogenated oils for most uses.
2026	New guidelines: eat real food, protein at every meal, far less sugar and refined carbs.

What Carbs Do in Your Body

No jargon. Just what happens after you eat a bowl of pasta, and what happens when you do not.

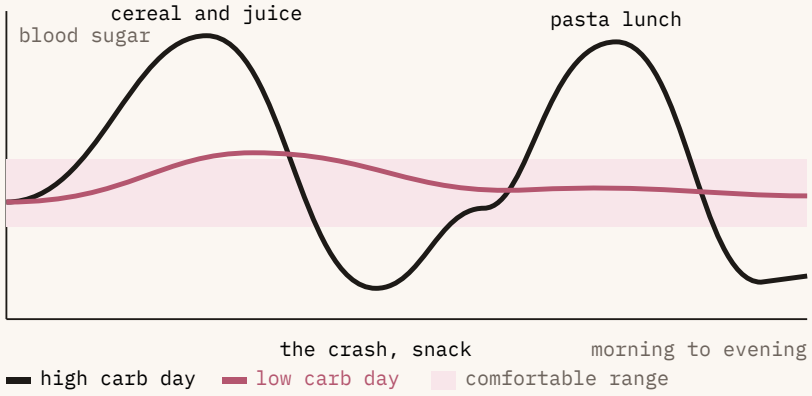
Step one, everything becomes glucose

Bread, rice, pasta, potatoes, cereal, fruit juice and sugar are all broken down into glucose, a simple sugar, and that glucose goes into your blood. Refined carbs do it fast. Your blood sugar rises.

Step two, insulin arrives

Your body likes blood sugar inside a narrow range, so the pancreas releases insulin. Insulin is the key that opens your cells so they can take glucose in. Some goes to your muscles and liver and is stored as glycogen. Once those stores are full, the extra is turned into fat.

Insulin has a second job that matters a lot for us: while insulin is high, your body is told to store fat, not to burn it.



A simple sketch, not real data: the shape of a high carb day next to a low carb day.

Step three, the crash and the snack

A fast rise in blood sugar is often followed by a fast drop. That drop is the 11 a.m. hunger, the 4 p.m. slump, the "I need something sweet" feeling. So you eat again, and the loop starts over. Many of us live inside that loop every day without knowing it.

When you eat fewer carbs

Blood sugar rises less, so insulin stays lower. With insulin lower, your body can reach into its fat stores for energy. Protein and fat also keep you full for longer, so the snacking loop gets quieter.

In the first week you will usually lose a few pounds quickly. Be honest with yourself about this: much of it is water. Every gram of stored glycogen holds water with it, and as glycogen goes down, the water goes too. It is a real change, it is just not all fat. The fat loss comes after, slowly.

And ketosis?

If carbs go very low, your liver starts turning fat into ketones, which your brain and muscles can use as fuel. That is ketosis, and it is where the word keto comes from. You do not have to be in deep ketosis for low carb to help you. At 10 to 15 percent carbs, the way we eat, some days you will be in light ketosis and some days you will not. Both are fine.

> The goal is not to fear carbs. The goal is to stop riding the blood sugar roller coaster all day.

What the Research Says

The honest version. Including the parts that do not make a perfect sales pitch.

Single studies are noisy. The best evidence comes from meta analyses, which pool many randomized controlled trials together. Here is what the big ones found when they compared low carb with low fat eating.

Weight

A 2020 meta analysis in the journal Nutrients pooled 38 trials with 6,499 adults. At 6 to 12 months, people on low carb diets lost on average about 1.3 kg more than people on low fat diets.

An older 2006 meta analysis in the Archives of Internal Medicine found the same thing at six months: more weight lost on low carb, with no calorie counting required in those trials.

A 2012 review in the American Journal of Epidemiology concluded that low carb diets are at least as effective as low fat diets for weight and for improving metabolic risk factors.

Blood fats

This is where low carb really shines. Across reviews, low carb eating tends to lower triglycerides and raise HDL, the "good" cholesterol. The 2020 review found both. A 2022 meta analysis of long trials, in Diabetes, Obesity and Metabolism, saw lower triglycerides and higher HDL still present at 18 to 30 months.

In people with type 2 diabetes, a 2017 meta analysis also found lower triglycerides and higher HDL with low carb eating.

The honest limits

LDL cholesterol. In the 2020 review, the low fat diets came out better for LDL, and another meta analysis found greater weight loss but higher LDL on low

carb. Some people see their LDL go up when they eat more fat, others do not. That is exactly why we tell you to get blood work done and talk to your doctor.

The differences are modest. A kilo or so is real, but it is not magic. The diet you can actually stick to beats the perfect diet you quit.

Long term outcomes, like heart attacks over decades, are still not well studied. Researchers on both sides say more long term trials are needed.

My takeaway: low carb is at least as good as low fat for weight, better for triglycerides and HDL, and for many women it is simply easier to stick to because you are not hungry. Keep an eye on your LDL.

Not All Fat Is Equal

Eating more fat does not mean eating any fat. The kind of fat matters as much as the amount.

The fat that really was a problem

Remember that Keys put natural saturated fat and industrial trans fat into one number? Trans fat came mostly from partially hydrogenated oils, made by forcing hydrogen into vegetable oil so it stays solid, for margarine, shortening, cheap baked goods and fried snacks.

In 2015 the US Food and Drug Administration decided that partially hydrogenated oils are no longer generally recognized as safe. After June 18, 2018, manufacturers could no longer add them to food for most uses. So the fat that came with the worst evidence was quietly taken out of the food supply. It was never butter.

The second book, Brian Peskin

The second book on my shelf is The Hidden Story of Cancer by Brian Scott Peskin. His main idea is about essential fats, the ones your body cannot make. He calls the unprocessed forms "parent essential oils": parent omega 6, linoleic acid, and parent omega 3, alpha linolenic acid. He argues that they help carry oxygen into your cells, and that heavily processed oils and trans fats damage that process.

His cancer argument is his own. It is not proven, and I do not present it as prevention or a cure. Please do not read it that way.

What I take from him is simpler, and I think hard to argue with: not all fat is equal. Unprocessed oils matter. Trans fats and heavily processed oils are best avoided. And do not mega dose fish oil because you read somewhere that more is better.

How that looks in my kitchen

- Cook with: butter, ghee, olive oil, avocado oil, coconut oil.
- Eat freely: eggs, fatty fish, olives, avocado, nuts and seeds in sensible amounts, full fat cheese and yoghurt.
- Skip: anything with partially hydrogenated oil on the label, deep fried fast food, and highly processed snack foods.
- Supplements: only what your doctor agrees with, and never mega doses.

The Ratio We Use

The third book is really a person: Milko Georgiev, and his high fat, low carb way of eating.

Milko Georgiev is the reason I eat the way I eat. His high fat, low carb approach, known in Bulgaria as VM NVH, uses a simple frame as a guide: about 60 percent of calories from fat, 25 percent from protein, and 15 percent from carbohydrates.

That ratio is the frame for all of our cooking: carbs at 10 to 15 percent, fat as the main fuel, protein at every meal.

Our two levels

- Strict, 10 percent carbs. For when you want faster results or you feel best with very few carbs.
- Relaxed, 10 to 15 percent carbs. For real life, for training days, for the long run. This is where most of us live.

What that means in grams

Percentages are hard to picture. Here is the same frame in grams per day, at the two calorie levels we use in our meal plans.

DAILY	1,500 CALORIES	1,800 CALORIES
CARBS AT 10%	about 38 g	about 45 g
CARBS AT 15%	about 56 g	about 68 g
PROTEIN AT 25%	about 94 g	about 112 g
FAT AT 60%	about 100 g	about 120 g

At the strict level, the extra 5 percent that comes out of carbs goes to fat, so fat rises to about 108 g at 1,500 calories and 130 g at 1,800.

> One gram of carbs or protein has about 4 calories. One gram of fat has about 9. That is why 60 percent of calories from fat is less food on the plate than it sounds.

Calories still count, a little

Low carb is not a free pass to eat unlimited cheese. The reason it works for so many of us is that fat and protein keep us full, so we naturally eat less. Our plans use 1,500 and 1,800 calories as two simple anchors. Your own number depends on your size, your age and how much you move, so treat them as starting points, not rules.

2026: Even the Guidelines Moved

For forty years the official advice was eat less fat, eat more grains. In January 2026, that changed in a big way. It took forty years, but we finally agree on the headline: eat real food.

On January 7, 2026, the US Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture released the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025 to 2030. The message was "eat real food."

What changed

- Prioritize protein at every meal.
- Choose full fat dairy with no added sugars.
- Dramatically reduce highly processed foods, the first time the guidelines named that category.
- Cut way back on refined carbohydrates like white bread. Whole grains stay, but in a much smaller place.
- Even stricter limits on added sugar.

The old food pyramid with bread at the bottom was flipped. Protein, healthy fats, vegetables and fruit now sit where the grains used to be.

What did not change

To be fair, the guidelines still keep the long standing limit of 10 percent of daily calories from saturated fat. Harvard nutrition experts welcomed the stronger line on sugar and processed food, but criticized what they called mixed messages on saturated fat, worried that it could raise LDL for some people.

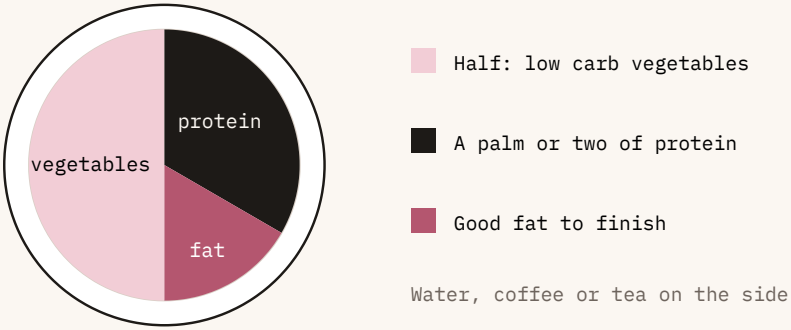
So the debate is not over. But the direction is clear: real food, more protein, far less sugar and refined flour. Low carb has said that all along.

What to Eat

Forget complicated rules. Build every plate the same way, and use these three lists.

The plate

- A palm or two of protein: eggs, fish, chicken, beef, pork, lamb, full fat yoghurt or cottage cheese.
- Half the plate of low carb vegetables: leafy greens, broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini, cucumber, peppers, mushrooms, asparagus, green beans.
- Good fat to finish: olive oil, butter, avocado, olives, cheese, a handful of nuts.
- Water, coffee, tea. Sparkling water with lemon.



Eat freely

- Eggs, any way you like them.
- Fatty fish: salmon, sardines, mackerel, trout.
- Meat and poultry, including the cuts with fat on them.
- Full fat dairy without added sugar: cheese, butter, cream, Greek yoghurt, kefir.

- Leafy greens and all the low carb vegetables above.
- Avocado, olives, olive oil, coconut.

Sometimes

- Berries, a small handful at a time.
- Nuts and seeds. Great food, easy to overeat.
- Dark chocolate, 85 percent or higher.
- Low carb bread, wraps and pasta swaps like shirataki noodles or hearts of palm pasta. Read the label every time.
- Wine. We are grown women. One glass, enjoyed, not counted.

Skip, most days

- Sugar, sweets, soda and fruit juice.
- Bread, pasta, rice, cereal, crackers and pastries made from regular flour.
- Potatoes and fries.
- Low fat products with sugar added back in.
- Anything with partially hydrogenated oil.
- Highly processed snack foods.

And once a week, a fun meal. Pasta, pizza, a burger with real fries. One meal never ruined anything. The next day, back to normal food and a normal walk.

Our blog favourites

The recipes our readers make again and again are the proof that this is not sad diet food: a proper steak with butter, crispy skin salmon, French onion chicken,

chocolate avocado mousse, and the Slavic kefir drink I grew up with. All of them are low carb, and none of them taste like a compromise.

Muscle, the Other Half

Food is half of the method. Muscle is the other half.

Muscle is metabolically expensive. It costs energy just to exist, so the more muscle you carry, the more your body burns at rest, all day. That is why our method pairs low carb eating with heavy lifting, not hours of cardio.

Protein at every meal feeds that muscle. That is one reason our ratio keeps protein at 25 percent, and it is also one of the clearest changes in the 2026 guidelines.

Our week, in one paragraph

Three short, heavy lifting sessions a week, three sets of five reps. After each one, the 30 15 15 walk on a treadmill or walking pad, 15 minutes climbing, 15 minutes coming down. Two dance days for joy and lymph drainage. Five quiet minutes every morning: diaphragm breathing, a stomach vacuum, a gentle belly massage. And rest days, on purpose, because muscles are built between workouts, not during them.

It is our own routine, built over years, not taken from a book. Everything about it, every exercise, step by step, plus three 30 day plans, is in our free training book, Skinny Secrets, The Body.

DOWNLOAD THE FREE TRAINING BOOK
blonderichandskinny.com, free download

Who Should Be Careful

Low carb is a big change for your body. For most healthy adults it is safe. For some people, it needs a doctor in the room.

The first week, keto flu

When you cut carbs, your body lets go of water, and salt and minerals go with it. In the first days some people get headaches, tiredness, brain fog, muscle cramps, irritability or constipation. People call it keto flu. It usually passes within days to a few weeks, and not everyone gets it.

- Drink more water than you think you need.
- Salt your food. A cup of broth helps a lot.
- Eat potassium and magnesium rich foods: avocado, leafy greens, nuts, fish.
- Go easy on training in week one.

Talk to your doctor first if

- You take medication for diabetes, especially insulin or sulfonylureas, because blood sugar can drop too low. Doses often need to change.
- You take an SGLT2 inhibitor, a type of diabetes medication. Combined with very low carb eating, it raises the risk of a dangerous condition called ketoacidosis.
- You have type 1 diabetes.
- You take medication for blood pressure, because low carb can lower it.
- You have kidney disease, a history of kidney stones, liver or gallbladder problems, or a heart rhythm problem.
- You are pregnant or breastfeeding. This is not the time to start.

- You have a history of eating disorders. Restrictive food rules can do real harm. Please speak with your doctor or a specialist before changing the way you eat.

Get your numbers

Before you start, and again after about three months, ask your doctor for basic blood work: blood sugar or HbA1c, triglycerides, HDL and LDL. Most people see triglycerides go down and HDL go up. If your LDL rises a lot, that is a conversation to have with your doctor, not something to ignore.

This book is not medical advice. If something feels wrong, stop, and check with a professional.

Where We Shop

Low carb does not need a specialty store. These are the places and products we actually build our recipes with.

The five stores in our cookbook

STORE	WHAT WE BUY THERE
COSTCO	Bulk staples, meat, eggs, cheese, butter, and Kirkland Signature almond flour.
TARGET	Everyday groceries and pantry basics.
ALDI	Low carb and keto bread and wraps, at a good price.
TRADER JOE'S	Cheese, nuts, olives, frozen fish and vegetables.
AMAZON US	The harder to find things: shirataki noodles and hearts of palm pasta.

Our recipe shelves

For our 89 single dish recipes on ShopMy, every ingredient is linked. We link our own ShopMy library first, then Target, Walmart and Amazon. A few specific products we could only verify at Kroger, iHerb or Macy's, so those link there. Prices and stock change all the time, so always check the label in your own store.

The Ultimate Keto Grocery List

Under everything sits one list: the Ultimate Keto Grocery List, 45 low carb whole foods. It is the shopping skeleton for every recipe we make. It is live on both of our shelves: on ShopMy at @blonderichandskinny, "Blonde, Rich & Skinny", and on Benable at @Blondie_13.

Questions Girls Ask Me

The same questions come up again and again in my messages. Here are the honest answers.

Do I have to count everything?

No. At the start, it helps to track for a week or two, just to learn what 40 or 60 grams of carbs looks like. After that, the plate does the counting for you: protein, half the plate vegetables, good fat.

Can I eat fruit?

Yes, some. Berries are the easiest fit, a small handful at a time. Bananas, grapes and dried fruit are much higher in sugar, so keep those for sometimes. Fruit juice is sugar water, skip it.

Will I lose muscle?

Not if you eat protein at every meal and lift heavy. That is exactly why our ratio keeps protein at 25 percent, and why the training book exists. Losing weight without lifting is how people end up smaller and softer instead of lean and strong.

What about my cholesterol?

Most people see triglycerides go down and HDL go up. LDL is the one to watch, because for some people it rises on a higher fat diet. Get your numbers checked before you start and after about three months, and talk them through with your doctor.

Can I drink alcohol?

Sometimes. Dry wine and plain spirits have far fewer carbs than beer, cocktails or sweet wine. Alcohol also lowers your guard around food, so one glass, enjoyed, is the sweet spot.

What if I slip?

Then you had a meal. One meal does not erase a good week. No guilt, no punishment workout, no starving the next day. Back to normal food and a normal walk.

Do I need special products?

No. Real food first: eggs, meat, fish, vegetables, dairy, good fats. Low carb bread, wraps and pasta swaps are nice extras, not the foundation. Read the label, because "keto" on the front does not always mean low carb on the back.

Is it safe long term?

For most healthy adults, studies up to two or three years look reassuring for weight, triglycerides and HDL. Very long term studies are still missing, which is why I eat a relaxed 10 to 15 percent most of the time, and why regular checkups matter.

Do I need supplements?

Food first. In the first weeks, extra salt, potassium and magnesium from food helps a lot. Anything beyond that, talk to your doctor, and never mega dose.

Your First Week

Seven small steps. Do one a day. By Sunday, you are eating low carb.

- Day 1. Clear the obvious: soda, juice, sweets, white bread. Do not throw away food, just stop buying it.
- Day 2. Shop once, from the Ultimate Keto Grocery List. Eggs, protein, vegetables, good fats.
- Day 3. Build every plate the same way: protein, half the plate vegetables, good fat.
- Day 4. Fix breakfast. Eggs, Greek yoghurt with berries, or a coffee with a splash of cream instead of cereal.
- Day 5. Salt your food and drink more water. Keto flu is mostly a water and salt problem.
- Day 6. Take a walk after your biggest meal. Your blood sugar will thank you.
- Day 7. Write down how you feel: energy, hunger, sleep, mood. Compare it with day 1.

Then what

Our cookbook, Skinny Secrets: The Low Carb Kitchen, takes it from here: 100 recipes, four 30 day meal plans at 1,500 and 1,800 calories, strict and relaxed, with shopping lists, plus Starbucks orders, eating out guides and store guides. The free training book, Skinny Secrets, The Body, does the same for training.

GET THE COOKBOOK AND MEAL PLANS
blonderichandskinny.com

Small things, done most days. That is the whole secret.

Sources

The three books behind our method

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Peskin, Brian Scott. *The Hidden Story of Cancer.* Houston: Pinnacle Press, 2006. Peskin argues that parent essential oils carry oxygen into cells, and that heavily processed oils and trans fats damage that process. His cancer argument is his own and is not presented here as proven prevention or a cure. This book uses only his fat quality point.

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Where the recipes come from

Our cookbook recipes are built on our own blog, blonderichandskinny.com, where our most loved dishes started, with general inspiration from Russian keto blogs. The training method, the 30 15 15 walk, heavy lifting at 3 sets of 5, dance days and the morning rituals, is our own routine, not taken from a book.

THE END, AND THE BEGINNING

Eat real food. Lift heavy. Walk tall.

Understand the why, and the how gets easy. Small things, done most days.

Find our shelves on ShopMy at @blonderichandskinny and on Benable at @Blondie_13.