

Keto and ADHD

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1. Enhanced Focus and Cognitive Function

The ketogenic diet eliminates spikes and dips in blood sugar, which supports the stable energy and associated mental clarity and focus that many people cite as a key benefit of keto. [\[15\]](#)

A 2018 study found that a ketogenic diet could be optimal for enhancing large-scale network function across the brain—a feature that is critical for higher levels of cognition. [\[16\]](#)

Stable energy, increased focus, and improved high-level cognitive function are all particularly beneficial for people with ADHD.

2. Reduced Hyperactivity and Impulsivity

The keto diet positively impacts neurotransmitter activity, particularly dopamine and serotonin. [\[17\]](#) [\[18\]](#)

This impact may support a decrease in hyperactivity and impulsivity commonly associated with ADHD.

Boosting fats and cutting carbs optimizes brain chemistry in ways that can help people with ADHD regulate behavior and control their impulsive actions.

3. Improved Mental Clarity and Mental Performance

Studies show that keto supports the function of mitochondria in brain cells. Mitochondria are the energy factories within each cell. [\[19\]](#) [\[20\]](#) [\[21\]](#)

This keto-induced change in neurology is likely responsible for the reports of improved mental clarity and heightened mental performance by many keto dieters.

Improving mitochondrial function can enhance cognitive processing, memory, and overall mental functioning in ways that are especially helpful for people with ADHD.

4. Balanced Mood and Emotional Stability

The keto diet helps to balance serotonin levels and stabilize GABA/glutamatergic neurotransmission, which, in turn, may help to stabilize mood and reduce irritability in people with ADHD. [\[22\]](#)

GABA is an inhibitory neurotransmitter, and irregularities in GABA are associated with ADHD, autism, and the severity of ADHD symptoms. [\[23\]](#)

5. Reduced Inflammation

Chronic inflammation has been linked to various neurological conditions, including ADHD. [\[24\]](#)

The ketogenic diet has been shown to provide powerful anti-inflammatory effects. These are produced by dramatically reducing carbs and increasing healthy fats.

The anti-inflammatory effects of keto have been studied as a factor in preventing Alzheimer's and may help alleviate ADHD symptoms associated with neurological inflammation. [\[25\]](#)

6. Improved Sleep Quality

People with ADHD often experience sleep problems, including insomnia, restlessness, and overall poor sleep quality. [\[26\]](#)

Studies show a ketogenic diet balances neurotransmitters, promotes adenosine activity and relaxes the nervous system while simultaneously reducing inflammation and chronic pain. All of these factors can improve sleep quality, leading to better daytime functioning. [\[27\]](#) [\[28\]](#)

These effects can be amplified by combining keto with intermittent fasting or time-restricted feeding. Eating meals only during daylight supports your body's circadian rhythm—an internal clock that regulates sleep and wake cycles.

8. Weight Management and Overall Health Benefits

Metabolic syndrome and its components, including obesity, type II diabetes, insulin resistance, and [leptin resistance](#), are common among people with ADHD. [\[29\]](#) [\[30\]](#)

Numerous studies show that ketogenic diets are remarkably effective at treating and reversing metabolic syndrome. And that they are far more effective than other dietary interventions, including low-fat and vegetarian diets. [\[31\]](#) [\[32\]](#) [\[33\]](#) [\[34\]](#) By treating the root hormonal causes of metabolic syndrome and obesity, keto may reduce associated ADHD symptoms.

9. Personalized Approach and Autonomy

Practicing a ketogenic diet empowers people to take an active role in managing their health and well-being.

When you make dietary changes and pay close attention to their impact on ADHD symptoms, you can gain a sense of control and autonomy over your ADHD symptoms, which can boost your self-esteem, motivation, and overall quality of life.

The Ketogenic Diet and ADHD: The Bottomline

Though limited in number, studies on the link between the ketogenic diet and ADHD suggest that keto may offer powerful benefits.

There are also numerous studies showing that keto benefits numerous physiologic and neurological functions associated with ADHD. These include

- Focus and cognitive function
- Reduced hyperactivity and impulsivity
- Improved mental clarity and performance
- Balanced mood and emotional stability
- Reduced inflammation
- Improved sleep
- Metabolic health

- Personal autonomy

For these reasons, keto may be an important step for people looking to improve their symptoms of ADHD.

„ADHD, like epilepsy, is a brain-based disorder. So could a keto diet likewise reduce ADHD symptoms? [Heidi Pfeifer, R.D., LDN](#), a clinical dietitian specialist at Massachusetts General Hospital for Children, has seen positive evidence.

Pfeifer has spent more than 20 years treating epilepsy in children for whom medications do not work. When these children are put on a strict or liberalized version of the keto diet (40-60 grams of carbohydrates per day), ADHD symptoms improve. “We have seen improved behavior and focus with both versions independent of full seizure control,” says Pfeiffer.”

"[A 2001 Johns Hopkins study](#) points to the same result. Looking at 65 children with epilepsy who were put on a ketogenic diet for one year, researchers saw “significant behavioral improvements in attention and social functioning” in the children, and a reduction in epileptic seizures. „

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<https://www.additudemag.com/ketogenic-keto-diet-adhd-symptoms/>