



NEW TO CARNIVORE? START HERE

A Beginner's Guide

by Amino Acid Honey Buns

HONORING CHRIST | HELPING WOMEN BEGIN WHILE UNFINISHED

You're allowed to learn as you go instead of having the whole thing figured out before you start

Before we jump in



I made this guide because I kept seeing carnivore starter guides sold behind paywalls. I don't think you should have to spend fifty dollars to learn how to buy meat, salt it, eat enough, and pay attention to your body. I'm not a carnivore expert. **I'm just a busy mom who tried carnivore because I needed something to change**, paid close attention to what happened, made some mistakes, learned a lot, and ended up feeling better than I expected. I've also spent a lot of time reading research, listening to other carnivores, and comparing community experience with what science can actually tell us right now.

This guide gives you a practical place to start. It's general education, not personal medical care. If you have diabetes, kidney disease, a serious medical condition, take medicine that may need to change when your diet changes, are pregnant, have a history of a serious eating disorder, or have another reason a major diet change could be complicated, talk with someone qualified who knows your health history first. Then come back and use the rest of this guide to make the experiment simpler.

How to use this guide without turning it into homework

You can read this straight through, but you don't have to. If you're still deciding whether carnivore makes sense to you, start with Part One. If you already know you want to try it, Part Two gets you fed without making the first week complicated. Part Three answers the questions that tend to pop up once your body starts responding. Part Four is about making carnivore survive real life, and Part Five helps you run a 30-day experiment and decide what you actually learned. Use the guide like a toolbox. Read what you need now, come back when a new question shows up, and skip anything that isn't useful yet.

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PART ONE: OKAY, WHAT ARE WE ACTUALLY DOING HERE?

You don't need to memorize a pile of carnivore rules before you start. You need to understand what the diet is, why people bother with it, what removing foods can teach you, and how strict you actually want your own experiment to be.

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So... what the heck is carnivore, anyway?

Carnivore centers your diet on animal foods. Most people eat meat, fish, eggs, animal fats, and dairy if they tolerate it. The exact version can be very broad or very strict. A standard carnivore diet might include beef, lamb, pork, poultry, fish, eggs, butter, tallow, cheese, and other animal foods. Some people use seasonings. Some drink coffee or tea. There's no single official carnivore rulebook.

A lion-style diet is much narrower. I used beef, tallow, salt, and water. The lion diet is defined as restrictively eating ruminant meat (beef, lamb, goat, bison, venison), salt, and water. The point of the stricter version is simplicity. You remove more variables, build a very plain baseline, and then add foods back one at a time if you want to learn what your body tolerates.

That's why the lion diet appealed to me. I was doing an elimination, and I wanted a clean starting point.

Broad Carnivore



Meat, fish, eggs, animal fats, and dairy if tolerated.

A wider food rotation

Lion-Style Elimination



Ruminant meat, salt, and water.

Fewer moving parts

Keep carnivore in its proper place

Treat carnivore like data collection. Your energy is data. Your digestion is data. Your pain level is data. Your hunger is data. Your gym performance is data. Your mood, sleep, cravings, clothes, measurements, and labs can all tell you something. **You can also change the experiment.**

Carnivore is a tool you can use for as long as it serves you.

Food, freedom, and identity

Food can be a faithful form of stewardship, and it makes a terrible savior. Christ holds my identity. Carnivore is one tool I use to nourish my body, learn my patterns, and care for the life God entrusted to me. Romans 14 gives believers room for different convictions around food. Another woman may honor God through different choices, and I can speak honestly about what has helped me while respecting her freedom.

I'm not interested in winning a purity contest. I eat sirloin because I like it and it costs less than ribeye. I eat eggs every morning. I eat salmon. I eat chicken wings. I use butter. I take a desiccated organ supplement because I don't enjoy eating liver. I eventually brought lemon and green tea back because I tolerate them. My goal is a diet that works in my actual life. Your version may look different.

Pay attention to your own data



Energy



Gym performance



Digestion



Mood



Pain



Sleep

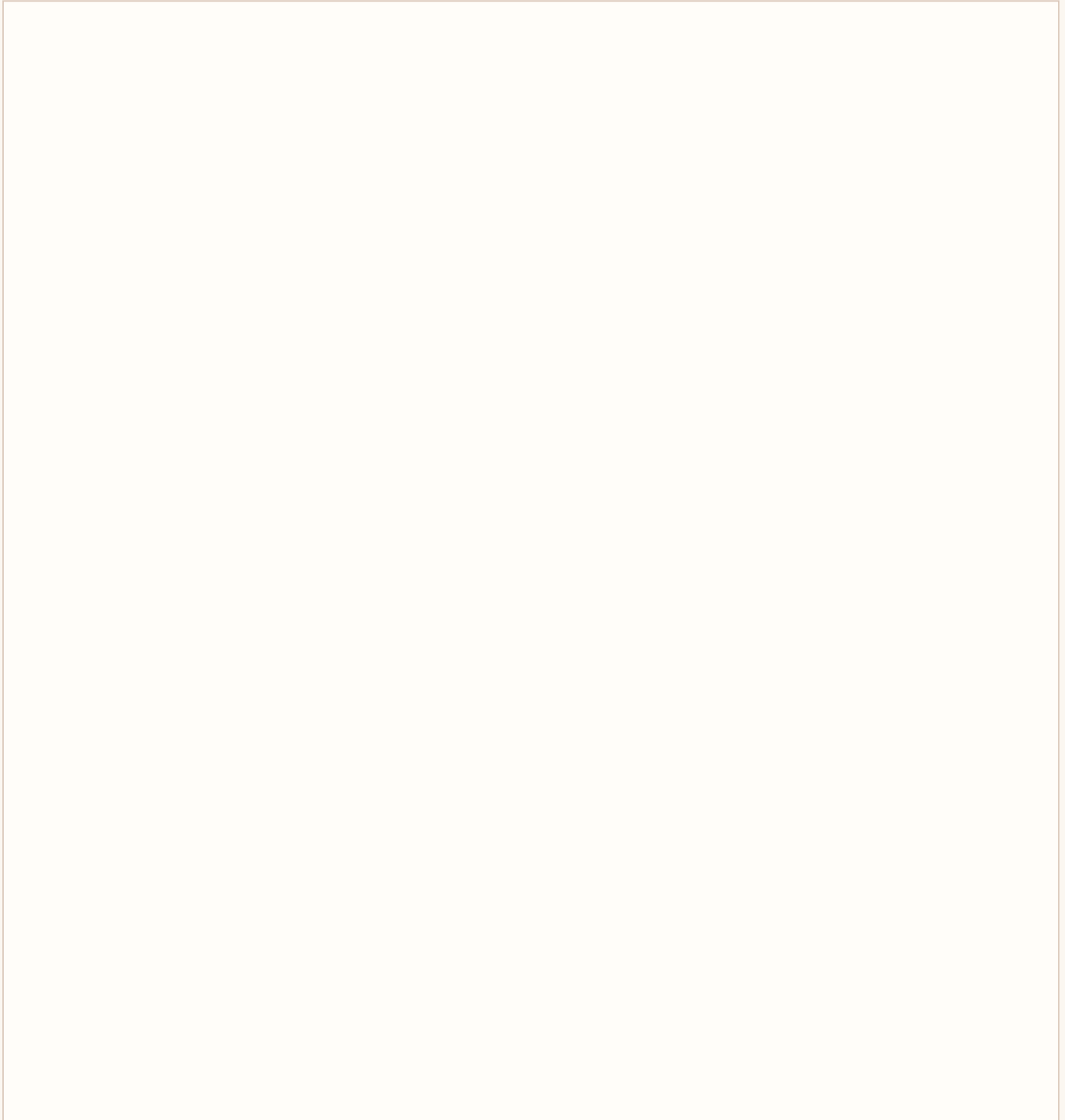


Hunger



Cravings

What I'm noticing

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for handwritten notes or observations.

Okay, but why would I try this?

You're probably here because something isn't working. Maybe you're tired of thinking about food all day. Maybe your weight won't move even though you feel like you're eating well. Maybe your joints hurt, your gut is unpredictable, your blood sugar is a mess, your skin is angry, or you live with some kind of chronic condition and you're curious whether food is making it worse. Maybe you simply want to know what your body feels like when you strip your diet down to something very simple.



That's why I tried it. I started a lion-style elimination diet on March 30, 2026. **My main reason was lipedema pain.** I had a constant low-grade ache and heaviness in my thighs. I noticed it especially when I lay down at night, and sometimes it kept me from sleeping. I'd already removed refined sugar. I was eating what most people would call a healthy diet—fruit, nuts, avocado, eggs, gluten-free foods, and very little processed junk. I was walking, lifting weights, and doing the conservative things I knew to do for lipedema. *I still hurt.*

Me in 2022, about one year postpartum, before carnivore—still carrying post-pregnancy weight and not feeling well.

I'd tried carnivore once before in 2022, so I knew how useful a very simple diet could be as an elimination tool. I decided to remove as many variables as I could and eat beef, tallow, salt, and water. My plan was to calm things down and then slowly add foods back. Then something unexpected happened. I felt so good that I didn't want to rush back. *The pressure and ache in my thighs began easing within the first couple of days. My head felt clear. My energy steadied. Food got quieter.* By the time I was ready to reintroduce foods, I wanted to experiment with eggs, butter, salmon, and other animal foods instead of going back to my old diet.

My experience is just that—my experience. It's also one story inside a much larger pattern. In the largest published survey of carnivore eaters so far, 2,029 adults who'd eaten carnivore for at least six months were studied. Ninety-three percent said health was their main reason for starting, and 95 percent said their overall health was better than before. **People also reported improvements in energy, sleep, strength, endurance, mental clarity, memory, focus, hunger, and food cravings.**

Among participants who already had certain chronic problems, the numbers were striking—97 percent of those reporting gastrointestinal conditions said they'd improved or resolved, 96 percent reported the same for musculoskeletal problems, 92 percent for skin conditions, and 89 percent for autoimmune conditions. [R2] These results are a very loud signal that meaningful changes occurred for most long-term carnivore eaters.

A published snapshot • 2,029 adults

SELF-REPORTED RESULTS / Lennerz et al., 2021 [R2]

93%

Health was their main reason for starting

95%

Reported better overall health

Respondents were a self-selected social-media sample who had eaten carnivore for at least six months. These reports do not predict your results.

So what are people actually noticing?

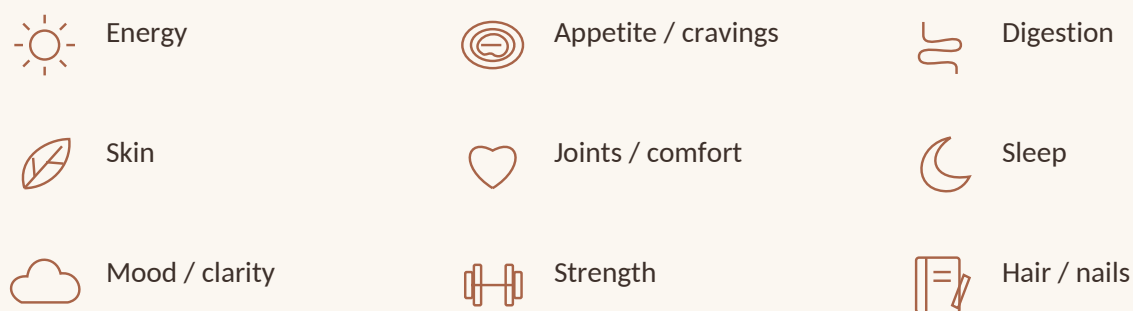
Spend any time around experienced carnivores and the same themes come up again and again. People talk about steadier energy, less hunger, quieter cravings, easier weight loss, better body composition, clearer thinking, better sleep, calmer digestion, less bloating, clearer skin, less joint pain, fewer aches, better mood, and improved strength or endurance.

People with chronic issues often describe symptoms becoming easier to live with or, in some cases, going into remission while they stay on the diet. You hear the same kinds of stories again and again—improvements in eczema, acne, IBS-type symptoms, reflux, arthritis or joint pain, allergies, brain fog, fatigue, anxiety, and other problems. [C6] The pattern is common enough that it should be taken seriously and studied much more closely.

Then there are the slower, less dramatic changes people love to talk about—skin feeling softer or clearer, nails becoming harder and less brittle, and hair looking thicker, shinier, or healthier after several months. [C6] Interestingly, some people—like myself—experience the opposite for a while. Rapid weight loss can trigger temporary hair shedding (called telogen effluvium), which is one reason hair is a terrible place to demand instant proof that a diet is working. [R31] My skin looks great on carnivore, while my hair has thinned after dropping 30 lbs quickly. I'm giving my hair time to grow back in fullness instead of pretending every part of me has to improve on the same schedule.

For me, the changes have included stable energy, major weight loss, less lipedema pain and pressure, clear skin, quieter food noise, and a general sense that my body handles life better. I also get sick less often, and when I do get sick it's less intense than before. No one can tell you which results you'll get. You may notice one huge change, ten small ones, or something completely different. But the amount of positive experience being reported by long-term carnivore eaters is one of the reasons a well-planned trial is worth considering.

What carnivores commonly report



Published self-reports and community observations [R2, C6] • Experiences vary.

Direct carnivore research is still young. A 2026 scoping review found only nine human studies that met its criteria. That's a small evidence base. It means there are major questions science hasn't answered yet. It also means the people actually eating this way are far ahead of the published literature. [R1] If you're interested, carnivore is worth a real experiment. **Give it enough time to learn something. Pay attention. Keep what helps. Change what doesn't.**

**Research****Community****History****My experience**

What we still don't know belongs in the picture, too.

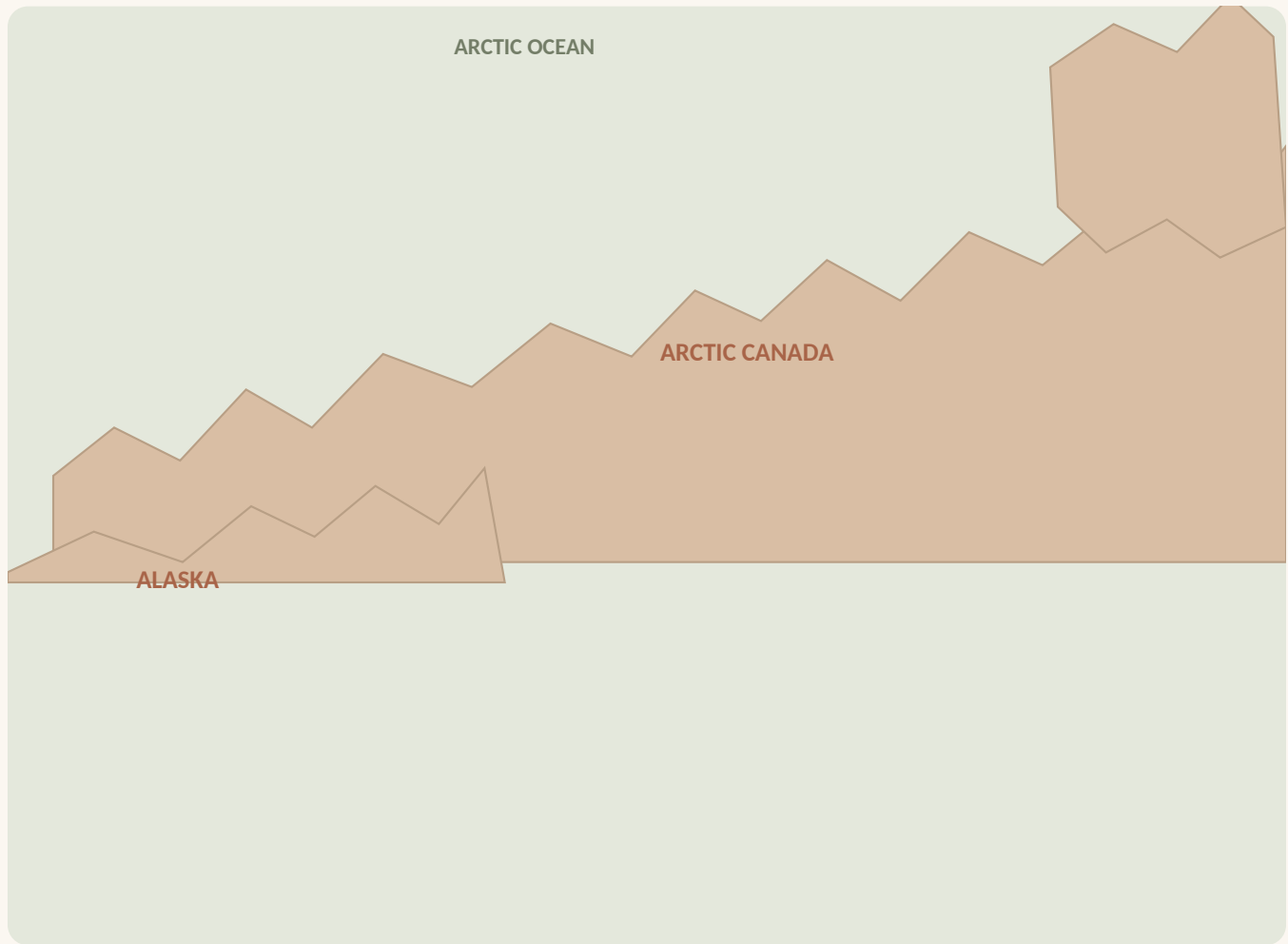
What happened to me: I didn't start because I wanted to become a carnivore. I started because I was tired of hurting. The diet earned my trust by how I felt on it.

Animal-heavy diets have a long human history

Human diets have always changed with geography and what food was available. Take the Inuit of Alaska as an example. Coastal Inuit traditionally relied heavily on whale, seal, walrus, fish, and other foods from the sea, while the inland Inuit depended heavily on caribou.

Traditional Inuit diets across Canada also centered around foods such as caribou, seal, whale, walrus, char, birds, and eggs, with some seasonal berries, seaweed, and other plants when they were available. [R17, R18, R32] While their diet isn't identical to a modern grocery-store carnivore diet, it doesn't need to be. The point is that humans have a long history of living on diets where animal foods and animal fat supplied a huge share of nutrition. Carnivore may look unusual in a modern supermarket world, but animal-heavy eating isn't some brand-new biological experiment invented by social media.

Animal-heavy diets across the Arctic



Whale



Seal / walrus



Fish



Caribou

Animal-heavy, not necessarily plant-free year-round. Foods varied by place and season. [R17, R18, R32]

Regional silhouette for orientation only.

What happens when you take plants out for a while?

Plants contain nutrients. They also contain natural compounds that can affect digestion and mineral absorption, and can cause negative symptoms in some people. Oxalates can bind calcium and play a role in calcium-oxalate kidney stones in those susceptible. Phytates can reduce the absorption of minerals such as iron and zinc. Lectins in certain raw or undercooked foods can cause problems and are changed greatly by cooking. Fermentable carbohydrates called FODMAPs can trigger gas, bloating, pain, and bowel changes in many people with IBS. Other plant compounds, including salicylates and tannins, can matter for some sensitive people. [R19, R20]

Four plant compounds, four different conversations



Oxalates

Can bind calcium; relevant to calcium-oxalate stones in susceptible people.



Phytates

Can reduce absorption of minerals such as iron and zinc.



Lectins

Some raw or undercooked foods can cause problems; cooking changes lectins greatly.



FODMAPs

Fermentable carbohydrates can trigger gas, bloating, pain, and bowel changes in many people with IBS.

Food, preparation, dose, and personal tolerance all matter. [R19, R20]

While many people tolerate these foods, a lot don't. Food preparation, dose, gut health, genetics, and the specific plant all matter. **An elimination diet gives you a clean way to learn your own tolerance.** That was the appeal for me. Before carnivore I ate a lot of fruit, avocado, almonds, cashews, and pistachios. I loved those foods. I also had constant thigh pain, problems sleeping, low energy, and constant food cravings. Removing everything at once gave me a baseline I'd never had before. Once you feel your baseline, reintroductions become much easier to notice.

And what about “oxalate dumping”?

Community reports

Carnivore and low-oxalate communities often describe something they call oxalate dumping—joint pain, gritty eyes, skin irritation, cloudy urine, or other symptoms after suddenly removing high-oxalate foods.

Research status

Oxalate biology is real, and kidney oxalate problems are real. *A defined “oxalate dumping syndrome” with that broad list of symptoms hasn't yet been established in clinical research*, but the carnivore community is full of reports of it.

I was aware of the idea when I started because I'd eaten a lot of higher-oxalate foods, especially nuts. I knew some people reported weird symptoms after cutting those foods out, and my attitude was basically—if something happens, I'll pay attention and keep going unless my body gives me a real reason to stop. I didn't have a dramatic “dumping” phase and I still haven't encountered one yet.

Pick your starting lane

You have two easy ways to begin, and both can work well. **Choose the one that best matches what you want to learn from the experiment.**



Option 1: Start broad

Eat animal foods you enjoy and can afford. A simple version can include beef, eggs, butter or tallow, fish, chicken, pork, salt, and dairy. This is a good starting point when your main goals are simplicity, lower carbohydrate intake, satiety, weight management, or seeing how you feel without grains, sugar, fruit, vegetables, and most processed food.

Option 2: Start strict with a lion-style elimination

Use a very small number of foods. My version was beef, tallow, salt, and water. This gives you fewer moving parts. It can be especially useful when your main goal is figuring out whether specific foods seem to trigger pain, digestive symptoms, skin symptoms, swelling, headaches, or another repeated pattern. I'd give the experiment at least two weeks before deciding that nothing is happening unless you have a clear reason to stop sooner. A full 30 days gives you more time to see patterns and move past the novelty of the first week. Then you can stay strict because you feel great, or you can start adding foods back.

Choose the version that serves your experiment.

From the carnivore community: A common zero-carb approach is two to four weeks of beef, salt, and water followed by one reintroduction at a time. There's no scientifically validated "magic day" when reintroduction must begin. The useful part is creating a stable baseline first.

What happened to me: I planned to reintroduce foods fairly quickly. I was pretty impatient in the beginning. Then I felt better and became afraid of bringing the pain back. I stayed simple longer because I wanted to protect the baseline I'd finally found.

PART TWO: MAKE THE FIRST WEEKS EASIER

Carnivore food is simple. Starting carnivore can still become weirdly complicated if you try to optimize every bite, supplement, appliance, and macro on day one. This part gets you shopping, cooking, eating enough, and handling the first couple of weeks without turning dinner into a research project.

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What do I actually buy?

You can start carnivore by purchasing normal grocery-store meat. You don't need to buy boutique meat, fill your freezer with ribeye, or purchase your beef from a farm that knows their cows by name. Personally, I eat normal grocery-store meat because that fits my current budget. Grass-fed and grass-finished beef and organic meat can be great if you enjoy it and can afford it, but grain-finished beef and non-organic meat are also perfectly practical foods. **Your budget gets a vote.** Start with foods you can afford and that you'll actually cook.



Cheap staples

- Ground beef
- Eggs
- Chuck roast



Easy variety

- Fish
- Chicken
- Pork



Optional extras

- Dairy
- Organs
- Travel backups

Food	Why it's useful	Budget/easy notes
75/25 or 80/20 ground beef or frozen patties	Protein + fat, cheap, fast	75/25 is richer and often more filling; 80/20 is a little leaner and still works well
Eggs	Fast, versatile, nutrient-dense	Usually one of the cheapest animal foods
Butter or tallow	Adds fat and flavor	A little goes a long way
Sirloin / top blade / chuck steak	Steak without ribeye prices	Watch sales and family packs
Chuck roast	Easy batch cooking	Pressure cooker or slow cooker
Salmon / sardines / other fish	Protein + omega-3 fats	Frozen fish can be cheaper

Food	Why it's useful	Budget/easy notes
Chicken thighs or wings	Variety and easy cooking	Air fryer friendly
Pork	Variety and often inexpensive	Choose simple ingredient lists if processed
Salt	Flavor + sodium	Smoked sea salt is a delicious way to add flavor
Cheese / dairy	Optional variety	Pull it back if it drives cravings or bothers digestion

You can make this diet expensive. You can also make it affordable. I recommend ground beef, eggs, chuck roast, bulk buying, and freezer portions instead of daily ribeye. [C1]

You don't need organ meat to earn your carnivore badge

Liver is extremely nutrient-dense. It contains large amounts of vitamin A, copper, B vitamins, and other nutrients. Some carnivores love it and insist everyone needs it, but many long-term carnivores report eating little or none. Community opinion is genuinely split on this topic. [C2]

I tried liver and didn't care for it but still wanted the health benefits. Instead of fresh liver and organ meat, I decided to take a beef organ supplement. There are several good options online, if you're interested. You can also eat other nutrient-dense animal foods such as eggs, seafood, dairy, and a variety of meats. One important note—liver contains a very concentrated form of vitamin A that your body can use directly. Very large, frequent servings of liver—or high-dose supplements containing that same form of vitamin A—can push intake too high, so more isn't automatically better. [R14]

Kitchen tools that make this way easier

You can start carnivore with a stove, a pan, and basic kitchen equipment. A few tools make this way of eating easier, though, especially when you're tired, busy, or staring at a frozen piece of meat and realizing you forgot to plan dinner. My three MVPs are my air fryer, my Instant Pot, and my cast iron skillet. I use them constantly because they make simple meat taste good without turning every meal into a project.



Air fryer

Fast, low effort



Instant Pot

Tough cuts, tender meals



Cast iron skillet

A really good sear

My three MVPs. Start with what you already own.

My air fryer is probably the easiest tool I own for carnivore. Frozen beef patties can go straight in with almost no thought, and it's also great for top blade steaks, chicken wings, and reheating meat without making it sad and rubbery in the microwave. My Instant Pot earns its counter space with cheaper, tougher cuts. Chuck roast, beef shank, and other collagen-rich cuts like beef cheek can go from intimidating to tender with pressure cooking, and being able to cook some meats from frozen has saved dinner more than once for me. My cast iron skillet is what I reach for when I want a really good sear on a steak! It gets hot, holds heat well, and gives meat that browned crust that makes very simple food feel like a 5-star meal.

A few other tools are worth having if they fit the way you cook. An instant-read meat thermometer takes the guessing out of steaks and poultry. Good tongs and a sharp knife make everyday cooking less annoying. Freezer bags, reusable containers, or a vacuum sealer are useful if you buy meat in bulk or want to freeze portions quickly instead of leaving cooked meat in the refrigerator for days. Extra freezer space can be incredibly helpful if you start buying family packs or stocking up during sales. Plenty of carnivores also love a grill or smoker. I don't use either one much myself, but they're great options if outdoor cooking is already your thing.

None of these tools is a requirement, and I wouldn't go spend hundreds of dollars before you've cooked your first burger. **Start with what you already own.** Once you know how you actually like to cook, the right tools become obvious. The best carnivore kitchen setup is the one that makes it easy for you to get fed without creating another complicated system to manage.



Tool	Why it's handy	Best for
Air fryer	Fast, low-effort cooking with easy cleanup	Frozen patties, top blade steaks, wings, reheating meat
Instant Pot / pressure cooker	Makes tougher, cheaper cuts tender	Chuck roast, shank, beef cheek, other collagen-rich cuts
Cast iron skillet	Excellent browning and searing	Steaks, burgers
Instant-read thermometer	Removes guesswork	Steak doneness, poultry, thick cuts
Freezer bags / containers / vacuum sealer	Makes bulk buying and quick freezing easier	Portioning meat, preserving freshness
Grill or smoker	Adds flavor and can cook larger amounts at once	Steaks, burgers, brisket, ribs, batch cooking
Sharp knife + sturdy tongs	Small tools that make daily cooking easier	Basically everything

Okay, but how much do I eat?

Eat enough to feel fed. That sounds almost too simple, especially if you've spent years counting, restricting, dieting, or second-guessing hunger. It took me a little while to trust it too. Carnivore food is very filling for many people, and protein and fat can make hunger feel different. I usually eat when I'm hungry and stop when I feel satisfied.

I also track what I eat in Cronometer because I like having the macronutrient data, and in the beginning it gave me a reality check while I was relearning what actual hunger felt like. I could see whether I had eaten enough calories, protein, and fat. If a strong urge to eat hit at the end of the day, I could look at what I'd already eaten and ask myself, "Am I actually hungry right now, or am I stressed and wanting food to help me decompress?" Sometimes the answer was hunger, and I ate. Other times the numbers helped me recognize that the urge was emotional rather than physical. That distinction was incredibly useful to me.

Protein and fat: you need both

Protein gives your body amino acids for muscle, enzymes, hormones, repair, and countless other jobs. Fat provides energy, carries fat-soluble vitamins, helps food taste good, and makes a very low-carb diet much easier to sustain. A lot of carnivores, including yours truly, feel better when they stop choosing ultra-lean meat and eat enough fat. At the same time, pouring extra rendered fat on every meal can send some beginners running to the bathroom. Your tolerance matters.

I often land around 70% of my calories from fat and 30% from protein. But that's my pattern, not your prescription. Fat contains more than twice as many calories per gram as protein, so a high percentage of calories from fat doesn't mean most of the food on your plate has to look like a puddle of grease. If you're hungry all the time, constantly thinking about food, losing strength, feeling weak, or getting obsessed with keeping your intake tiny, **eat more before you decide carnivore is failing you.** If you're comfortably full for hours, have good energy, and your body is moving in the direction you want, you probably don't need to force extra meals just because a clock says it's lunchtime. I personally know several carnivores who eat only once or twice a day and stay satiated—that's what works for them. Find what works for you!



Protein

Amino acids for repair
4 calories per gram



Fat

Energy and flavor
9 calories per gram

When tracking starts to feel like a verdict

I am in Celebrate Recovery for food addiction and control issues, so I pay attention to what tracking is doing in me. Data can clarify hunger, patterns, and adequacy. If it begins feeding rigidity, fear, punishment, or preoccupation, pause and bring that honestly to God and trusted support. You are allowed to eat, rest, simplify, and choose a gentler way of noticing.

What I want to notice

Electrolytes: helpful, but easy to overthink

When you sharply lower carbohydrate intake, insulin drops and your kidneys tend to release more sodium and water. That's one reason people often lose several pounds quickly during the first few days. Sadly, it's not several pounds of body fat disappearing overnight. **Much of that first drop is water.** This shift can also change how you feel. Headaches, lightheadedness, dizziness, fatigue, brain fog, low energy, muscle cramps or weakness, nausea, digestive weirdness, and even a temporary dip in exercise performance can all show up during the transition.

That cluster of early symptoms is often nicknamed the keto flu. It isn't an actual flu; it's simply the name people use for the rough, “blah” feeling that can happen while the body is adjusting to a very-low-carb way of eating. Water and sodium shifts are probably part of that picture, which is why adequate fluids, salt, and sometimes a sugar-free electrolyte mix can help. ^[R33] Electrolytes can be useful in the beginning, but they're also one of the easiest places to start chasing every symptom with another supplement.



Sodium



Potassium



Magnesium



Fluids

Learn from my magnesium mistake

The first time I tried carnivore in 2022, I developed horrible night-time calf cramps that would wake me from a dead sleep. I took magnesium because magnesium is what everybody told me to take for cramps. I also used an electrolyte powder that contained sodium, potassium, and you guessed it—more magnesium. Still, the cramps kept happening. When I tried carnivore again in 2026, I was scared of the same thing happening. I started with electrolytes and extra magnesium again. Then I backed off the extra magnesium and eventually stopped micromanaging electrolytes. The cramps disappeared and stayed gone.

One ingredient can show up in more than one place



Magnesium supplement



Electrolyte powder

Look at what you're taking together.

I can't prove exactly why that happened. I can tell you what it taught me. **A cramp is a symptom, not necessarily a sign of a magnesium deficiency.** High supplemental magnesium can cause diarrhea, nausea, and abdominal cramping, and the NIH adult upper limit for magnesium from supplements and medications is 350 mg per day unless a clinician is directing otherwise. [R13] Use salt. Drink when you're thirsty. An electrolyte mix can be helpful when you're adapting, sweating heavily, sick, or clearly feeling better with it. Your goal is balance, not winning an electrolyte contest.

From the carnivore community: Experienced carnivores land all over the map with electrolytes. Some swear adding more fixed everything; others felt better after backing off. Treat those stories as troubleshooting ideas, then watch your own response. [C3]

So... what might the first two weeks feel like?

Your first week may be dramatic. It may also be surprisingly boring. I expected a bigger physical adjustment than I got. The hardest part for me was psychological. On my first morning, I was already mourning my green tea. Then I realized I couldn't put lemon in my water. I couldn't chew my usual gum. I couldn't use pepper. Every tiny habit suddenly became visible because I'd removed it. This was the most restrictive diet I'd ever tried, and food was basically going to be fuel for a while. I was tired, I'd slept poorly, and I wasn't feeling cheerful about the experiment. Then my body started giving me reasons to keep going.

By day two, the pressure and inflammation in my thighs seemed to be easing. I felt tired because I'd slept only five hours due to helping out a friend in crisis, but otherwise I felt good. By day three, I'd been urinating a lot and had dropped several pounds of water. By day four, my brain and head felt great. My sparkling water tasted almost sweet. My sense of smell was stronger. I also had a surprise bout of loose stool after adding a lot of fat.

That first week taught me two things: *adaptation doesn't have to be miserable, and every symptom still needs context*. Sometimes tired means you slept five hours. Sometimes a headache shows up on the day you forgot your usual salt and fluids. Sometimes loose stool follows a giant dose of rendered fat.

The first two weeks: notice what changes

	DAY 1	DAY 14
Water / scale	Early movement may be water.	
Appetite / cravings	Hunger and familiar rituals can shift.	
Energy	You may feel good, flat, or somewhere between.	
Digestion	Bowel habits can change.	
Exercise	Performance may feel different.	

Your experience does not have to match anyone else's. [R33]

What might show up

During the first couple of weeks, people commonly report changes in water weight, hunger, bowel habits, cravings, energy, and exercise performance. This is where that old keto flu can show up again—headache, lightheadedness, fatigue, brain fog, cramps, digestive weirdness, or a workout that simply feels different while your body is adjusting to very-low-carb eating. [R33] Some people feel great quickly. Some feel flat for a week or two. Some take longer to settle in. Your experience doesn't have to match anybody else's timeline.

My first weight lifting workout went surprisingly well, even though I'd slept badly and was only two days into carnivore. I pushed hard, got more reps and higher weights than I had in the workouts before it, and finished completely spent. I was surprised that changing my diet didn't tank my performance right out of the gate.

What the first week felt like for me



My experience. Yours may be different.

PART THREE: YOUR BODY IS GOING TO HAVE OPINIONS

This is where the experiment gets interesting. Digestion can change. Cravings can get quieter. Freshness may matter more than you expected, and foods you add back can give you surprisingly clear feedback. You aren't trying to force a perfect response; you're learning how your body answers.

What happens to your gut on carnivore?

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What happens to cravings and food noise?

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How to add foods back without muddying the experiment

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What happens to your gut on carnivore?

A common question people ask before starting carnivore is, “How am I going to poop without fiber?” Despite what the Metamucil commercials would have us believe, our digestive tracts can move waste without dietary fiber. Fiber adds bulk and changes stool water content, and it can be useful for some people with constipation. [R9] A low-residue diet leaves less indigestible material behind, so many carnivores simply make less stool and go less often. **If you're comfortable, not straining, and your stool isn't hard or painful, going less often doesn't automatically mean you're constipated.**

Fiber also affects different guts differently. Some people notice more bloating, urgency, pain, or diarrhea when they push fiber higher. People with certain intestinal strictures are sometimes specifically told to adjust the amount and texture of fiber because bulky food can make symptoms worse. [R10] That helps explain why gut advice can't be reduced to “more fiber is always better.” The carnivore community is full of people who noticed their digestive symptoms improved when they removed plant foods, and this is one of the reasons many people experiment with carnivore in the first place.

A simple digestion decoder



Comfortable, going less often

A lower-residue pattern may leave less stool.



Hard, painful, or straining

Going less often is not the same as feeling comfortable.



Loose stool

Look at added fat, supplements, and recent food changes.

A practical pattern check [R9, R10]

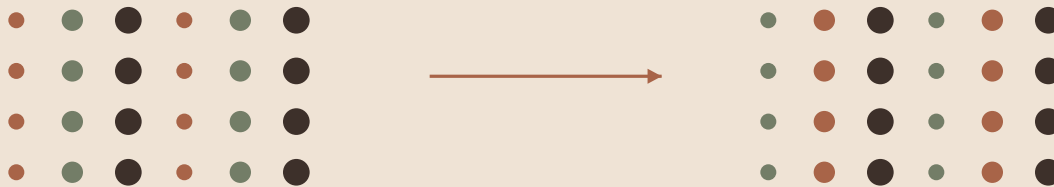
And what about your gut microbiome?

Your gut microbiome is the community of bacteria and other microbes living in your digestive tract, and it changes according to what you eat. When you switch from a mixed diet to carnivore, the mix of microbes changes too. That's your gut adapting to a different food supply. The early research we have is reassuring—long-term carnivore eaters can maintain a diverse gut microbiome even without eating plant fiber.

In a 2026 study, researchers compared 10 healthy people who had eaten carnivore for about three years with 874 omnivores. The carnivore group had a similar overall level of gut-microbe diversity, and one measure of how many different types of bacteria were present was actually higher in the carnivore group. [R27] A 2024 case study found something similar in a healthy man who had eaten strict carnivore for four years. His gut diversity was comparable to healthy omnivores. [R28] Broader very-low-carb research also shows that these diets can maintain or even increase some measures of gut diversity. [R30]

Your gut bacteria can shift surprisingly fast. In one human experiment, people ate either an all-animal or all-plant diet, and their gut microbes began changing within about a day. [R29] The microbes that were best suited to the foods being eaten became more common. That's exactly what we'd expect from a living ecosystem. **The takeaway is simple. Carnivore changes your gut microbiome, and the limited human research so far shows that long-term carnivore eaters can maintain microbial diversity.** We still have a lot to learn about which specific microbes matter most, but a diverse gut microbiome is absolutely possible on a carnivore diet.

Diet changes → microbiome adapts



A living ecosystem responds to the foods you eat.

The long-term significance of specific changes is still being studied. [R27–R30]

Yes, loose stool can happen

Loose stool is also a common beginner experience. Large amounts of added or rendered fat can be a factor, and magnesium supplements can loosen stools too. Your digestive system may need some time to adjust to a much higher-fat pattern. **If this happens, simplify before you panic.** Pull back on consuming rendered fat, look at the supplements you're taking, and notice whether one particular food is consistently involved.

What happened to me: I had loose stool on my first day after beef patties with extra tallow, and it happened again a few days later after I probably overdid the fat. My body adjusted pretty quickly. The glamorous side of carnivore doesn't make social media very often.

What happens to cravings and food noise?

The first day felt restrictive to me because I suddenly noticed every little food ritual I had. Then food got quiet. I'd already removed refined sugar before carnivore, so I wasn't fighting a big sugar habit on day one. What changed was the constant mental negotiation around food. I didn't have to decide between twenty "healthy" choices. I didn't need to plan snacks all day. I ate a small rotation of foods that filled me up, and then I went on with my life.

That simplicity became, and still is, one of my favorite parts of carnivore. Experienced carnivores talk constantly about "food noise" getting quieter. Some people say cravings faded in a week or two while others say it takes longer. And others still struggle even after months. I've heard all three versions, which is a good reminder that **your timeline doesn't have to match someone else's**. [C4]

For me, the bigger change was emotional. I used to turn to food when I was stressed, and I gave food responsibilities it was never meant to have, such as moderating my emotional state. Carnivore made that harder because there was no endless variety of comfort food waiting for me, and that pushed me to deal with my emotional state instead of automatically numbing it with food.

Milk gave me one of my clearest lessons about cravings. Though many carnivores consider milk an acceptable part of the diet, when I added it back, my old cravings returned full-force. It felt almost like I'd switched an old sugar-craving circuit back on. My mood shifted too; I felt noticeably more depressed and anxious. That was enough information for me, so I cut the milk back out. A food doesn't have to give you a stomachache to be a poor fit for you. Cravings, food noise, and mood count as data too.

"Then food got quiet."



Eggs



Patties



Steak



Salmon

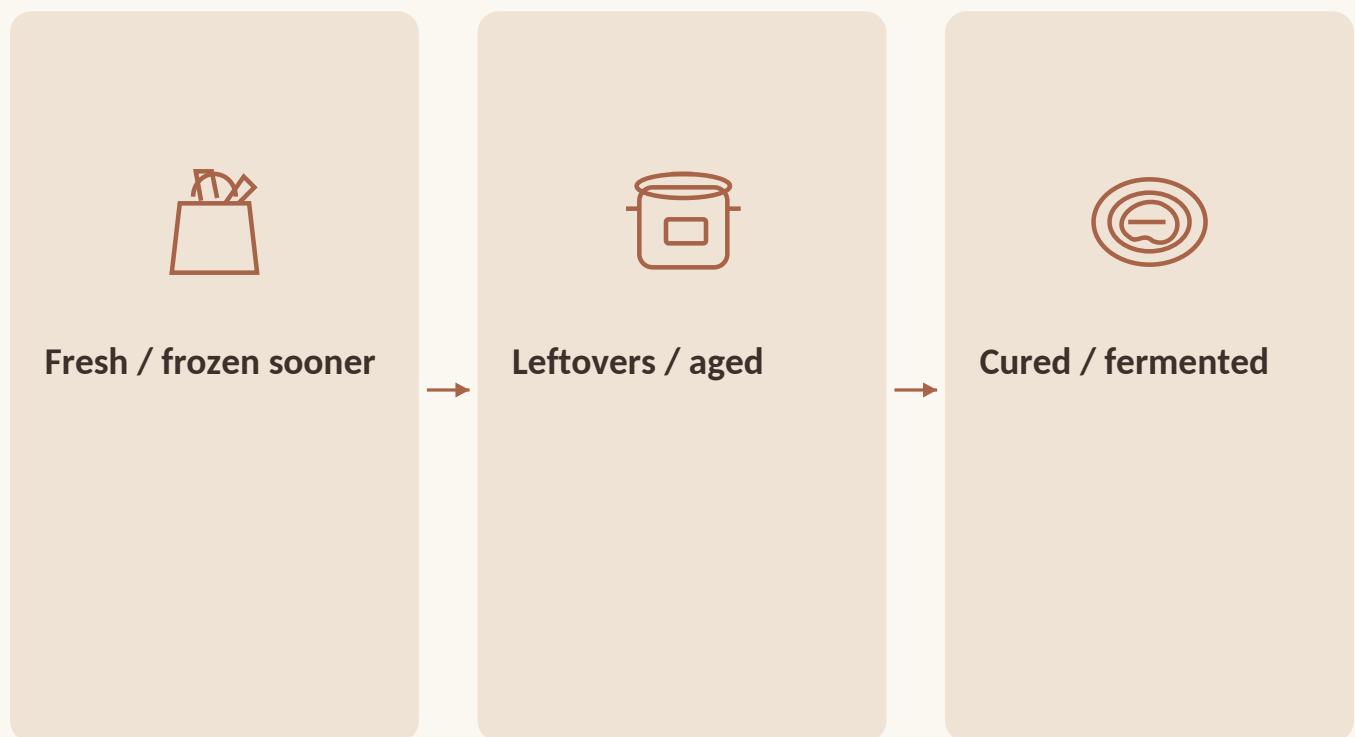
Food decisions

My experience • Different people describe different timelines. [C4]

Fresh meat, leftovers, and the histamine question

Some people on carnivore notice that fresh meat feels different from aged, cured, fermented, or long-stored meat. Histamine can build up in food as it sits, ages, ferments, or cures, and cooking doesn't reliably remove histamine that's already there. [R12] If you suspect freshness matters for you, try consuming fresher meat, freezing portions sooner, and comparing how you feel with leftovers or aged and cured foods. Experienced carnivores talk about this often, especially with ground beef and leftovers. [C5]

I noticed that fresh ground beef usually treated me better than ground beef that had sat in my refrigerator. On one occasion, my thigh pain flared after eating leftover ground beef. This gave me a useful pattern to test, and my solution was simple—eat ground beef fresh when I can and freeze portions sooner when I know I won't use them right away. If you feel great on fresh meat and consistently worse after leftovers, aged cheese, cured meats, or other high-histamine foods, **freshness may be worth testing for yourself.**



Possible histamine load can rise with storage and processing. [R12, C5]

How to add foods back without muddying the experiment

Once you've got a stable baseline, reintroductions can teach you a lot. Elimination-and-reintroduction is a standard concept in several areas of nutrition and food intolerance—remove suspected foods, wait for symptoms to settle, then add foods back and watch what happens. The exact protocol depends on the condition and the person. [R11] For a personal carnivore experiment, keep it simple. **Add one food. Keep the rest of your diet stable.** Eat enough of the new food to make the test meaningful. Then watch for a few days before adding something else.

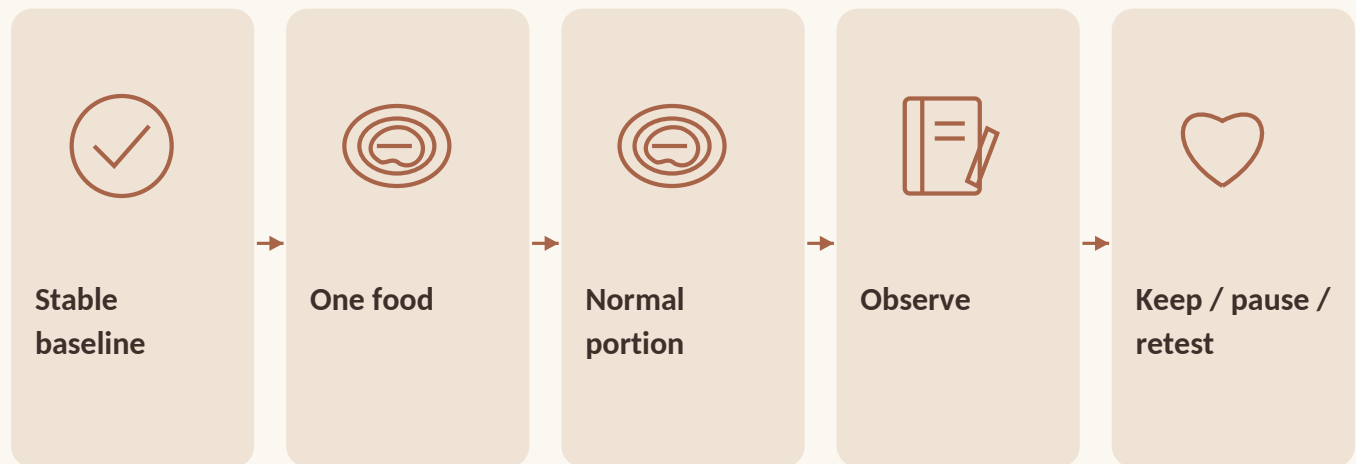
Track the symptoms that matter most to you. For me, thigh pain and swelling were huge. I also watched digestion, headaches, energy, skin, congestion, sleep, cravings, and weight gain from water retention.

How reintroductions went for me

I started with eggs and butter. I was genuinely worried eggs might cause trouble, but they have become one of my best-tolerated foods and are now part of breakfast pretty much every day. Dairy was more complicated. Milk didn't give me obvious digestive problems, but it kicked up very strong food cravings and my mood felt noticeably worse, so I pulled it back out. Kefir didn't go well for me either; I had GI trouble and stopped using it. Salmon became a regular food. Chicken came back. Pork appears occasionally. I eventually brought back green tea and lemon and tolerated both, which made me very happy because I'd missed those from day one.

Your goal is to learn what makes your life and body better.

One food at a time



Watch for a few days before adding something else.

Food

Date

What I noticed

What about nutrients?

Animal foods are packed with nutrients. Beef gives you highly bioavailable protein, B12, zinc, iron, selenium, phosphorus, B vitamins, and more. Eggs bring choline, selenium, B vitamins, fat-soluble nutrients, and excellent protein. Salmon adds omega-3 fats and vitamin D. Dairy, if you tolerate it, can add calcium and iodine. Seafood can add iodine, selenium, omega-3s, and trace minerals.

A 2024 modeling study built four hypothetical carnivore meal plans and found that they easily met several nutrient targets, including riboflavin, niacin, phosphorus, zinc, B6, B12, selenium, and vitamin A. Some versions fell short of current reference values for thiamin, magnesium, calcium, vitamin C, and sometimes iodine, potassium, folate, or iron. That study modeled diets rather than measuring actual long-term carnivores, so it's a useful map rather than a verdict. [R4] This is one reason I like variety within carnivore. I eat eggs, beef, salmon, chicken, butter, and other animal foods instead of assuming one cut of beef must do every nutritional job forever.

Animal foods bring different strengths



Beef

B12 • zinc • iron



Eggs

Choline • selenium



Salmon / seafood

Omega-3s • vitamin D



Dairy, if tolerated

Calcium • iodine



Optional organs

Vitamin A • B vitamins

Long-term food choices matter: iodine, calcium, magnesium, vitamin C, folate, and potassium can vary with your rotation. [R4, R15, R16]

Yes, meat has potassium

You may hear that meat has almost no potassium. **That's false. Beef and salmon both contribute meaningful potassium.** Potassium intake can still vary depending on how much you eat and which foods you choose, but meat isn't empty of potassium just because it doesn't come with a plant-food label. [R15]

Vitamin C deserves a normal conversation

Vitamin C is one of the first things people worry about when they hear “carnivore,” so let's keep this simple. Animal foods aren't vitamin-C-free. Fresh meat contains small amounts, and some seafood and organ meats contain more. [R4, R16] The amount is usually lower than what you'd see in many fruits and vegetables, but that doesn't automatically tell us how much vitamin C someone eating carnivore actually needs.

There's also a long-running idea in the low-to-no-carb world that vitamin C may be used differently when carbohydrate intake is extremely low. Glucose and vitamin C interact in the body, so researchers and carnivore clinicians have asked whether lower glucose exposure changes how much vitamin C you need. We don't have enough evidence yet to give carnivores a special official vitamin-C number. What we can say is that scurvy hasn't shown up as a common pattern in the published carnivore literature. [R1] So I don't think a beginner needs to start carnivore assuming scurvy is waiting around the corner. Eat enough animal food, include variety if you want it, and pay attention to your health over time.

**Animal foods aren't
vitamin-C-free.**

**We don't have enough
evidence yet to give
carnivores a special
official vitamin-C number.**

**Eat enough animal food,
include variety if you
want it, and pay attention
to your health over time.**

Okay, what about cholesterol?

Cholesterol is one of the loudest arguments around carnivore, and I don't want to turn this into a lipidology lecture. Some people see triglycerides fall and HDL rise. Some people also see LDL rise, sometimes by a lot. I never had a pre-carnivore cholesterol panel, so I'm not going to write this as if I did or tell you that you have to get one before you start. Personally, cholesterol changes aren't something that make me afraid of carnivore, and they wouldn't have stopped me from trying it.

Current medicine still considers LDL relevant to cardiovascular risk, and there are still open questions about how to interpret large LDL rises in otherwise metabolically healthy people eating very-low-carb diets. [R22] I don't think a beginner guide needs to settle that whole argument. If cholesterol is something you care about, **learn your numbers and look at them in context** rather than letting one scary headline—or one reassuring social-media post—make the decision for you.



Triglycerides



HDL



LDL

Cholesterol is more than one number.

PART FOUR: MAKE IT WORK IN REAL LIFE

A diet can look brilliant on paper and fall apart on a busy Tuesday. This part is about ordinary meals, grocery bills, family dinners, restaurants, church potlucks, travel, and the gym—the places where your way of eating has to become normal enough to keep doing.

So what does everyday carnivore actually look like?

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What a week of carnivore could look like

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Carnivore without a ribeye budget

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When you're the only carnivore in the house

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So what does everyday carnivore actually look like?

My diet works because it's repetitive enough to be easy. Breakfast is usually eggs with butter and some Canadian-style turkey bacon. I prefer eating the same breakfast every morning because I don't have to think about it and it tastes absolutely delicious! Lunch or dinner rotates through a small group of meals: sirloin, beef patties, salmon, chuck roast, chicken wings, blade steaks, leftovers, or another easy cut of beef. I cook patties and wings in the air fryer. I use the pressure cooker for chuck roast and other tough cuts. I cook eggs and salmon on the stovetop. A steak can be six to eight minutes of actual cooking.

I don't spend time making carnivore bread, carnivore pizza, or elaborate replicas of every food I used to eat. That'd create more food noise for me, and one of the best parts of carnivore is how little mental space food takes up now. Your version can be fancier if you love cooking. *Mine is built around my life.*



Ten easy meals you can actually make

- 1 Beef patties with salt and butter or tallow
- 2 Eggs scrambled or fried in butter with bacon or another simple breakfast meat
- 3 Sirloin steak with butter and salt
- 4 Salmon cooked in tallow or butter with eggs
- 5 Chuck roast in the pressure cooker
- 6 Chicken wings in the air fryer with butter and Parmesan
- 7 Ground beef bowl with egg yolks or butter
- 8 Burger patties topped with fried eggs
- 9 Leftover roast reheated with butter
- 10 A simple beef-protein shake when you need food and don't want to cook

When I truly can't be bothered

Leftovers win. Second place goes to frozen beef patties in the air fryer. They take minutes and create very little cleanup. That's the kind of food that saves me on a day when everybody else in the house is eating something I'm not and I don't want to cook two complicated dinners.



What a week of carnivore could look like

This is one example of what a simple week can look like. Change the portions based on your hunger. Skip a meal if you're genuinely not hungry. Add food if you're hungry. Swap anything you dislike.

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Monday	Eggs + butter + breakfast meat	Beef patties	Fresh-cooked salmon + eggs
Tuesday	Eggs + butter	Beef patties	Sirloin steak
Wednesday	Eggs + butter + breakfast meat	Leftover steak	Chuck roast
Thursday	Eggs + butter	Leftover chuck roast	Chicken wings
Friday	Eggs + butter	Leftover chuck roast or patties	Fresh-cooked salmon
Saturday	Eggs + breakfast meat	Leftovers or skip if not hungry	Steak or burgers + eggs
Sunday	Eggs + butter	Easy packed food or restaurant meat	Chuck roast / patties / family meal adaptation

A week like this is intentionally boring on paper. **That's the point.** You don't need a new recipe every night to eat well. You need food you enjoy enough to repeat, food you can afford, and food that leaves you satisfied.

Build Your Week

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Carnivore without a ribeye budget

Ribeye is delicious. Ribeye is also expensive. I eat much less ribeye now than I did when I first started because I found cuts I like that cost less. Sirloin is one of my favorite cheaper cuts; just add butter or tallow and you're good to go! As for beef patties, I started carnivore eating 80/20 patties, and they're still a great option if you prefer something a little leaner. I eventually found that 75/25 patties were richer, more flavorful, and more filling for me, so that's what I prefer eating now.

Chuck roast is economical and makes multiple meals. Top blade steak is excellent in price point and flavor. Eggs give you a lot of nutrition for the price. Chicken wings or thighs add variety without draining your wallet. Salmon doesn't have to be fresh from a fancy fish counter; frozen works and is often cheaper, too!

Buy family packs when the price is good. Freeze individual portions. Learn one or two tough cuts that become tender in a pressure cooker or slow cooker. **Look at the price per pound instead of the name of the cut.** You can start with grocery-store hamburger, eggs, butter, and salt.

Save room in the grocery budget

Save

Ground beef • eggs • chuck roast • chicken thighs / wings • canned or frozen fish

Splurge

Ribeye • premium steaks • specialty meats



Buy family packs. Freeze individual portions.

When you're the only carnivore in the house

My husband and son aren't carnivore. I am. That means I still cook food I don't eat. It also means I learned how to make my own food so simple that feeding myself doesn't become another full dinner project. If I'm making something for my family, I may throw patties in the air fryer for myself. I may reheat chuck roast. I may cook a steak while their dinner finishes. Sometimes we share the same meat and they get sides I don't want. **You don't need your household to copy you.**

Eating out without making it a whole thing

Look at the menu before you go. Most restaurants have meat somewhere: burger patties, steak, grilled chicken, eggs, seafood. Ask for the meat without the sides and condiments, or let your significant other, friends, or kids have the sides. **Keep the order simple.**

Church, work, travel, and real life

Preparation solves a lot. I bring Chomps beef sticks or another simple meat snack like pork cracklings when I know food may be limited. At a church potluck, I bring my own food or something to share that I can also eat. The same idea works for work events, road trips, parties, and family gatherings. **Think ahead just enough that hunger doesn't make the decision for you.** If fasting is already something you tolerate well, that can also be an option. A non-carnivore-friendly event doesn't have to turn into a food emergency if you're prepared.



At home

Sometimes we share the same meat and they get sides I don't want.



Eating out

Keep the order simple.



On the go

Think ahead just enough that hunger doesn't make the decision for you.

When people ask what you're doing



You'll probably get questions. The majority of my friends and family have been very supportive of my carnivore journey. However, a few have had questions or concerns because the diet's unfamiliar to them. I tell them I started carnivore as an elimination diet, that I've felt dramatically better on it, and that I choose to keep eating this way while it's serving me. That's enough. You can answer honest questions without turning every meal into a debate or feeling like you have to defend your plate to everyone in the room.

What about the gym?



If you already train, **keep moving unless your body is clearly asking for a lighter day.** Your first week can feel different because you just made a major change in how you eat, and some people notice lower endurance or less pop during repeated high-intensity work while they adjust. Other people barely notice a difference. I kept strength training and walking because both were already part of my life before carnivore. That matters when I talk about my results. My lipedema pain, swelling, and body measurements changed after I changed my diet even though I was already lifting, walking, using compression, and doing the other things I knew to do. That's why I believe the diet was a major piece for me. I also believe the diet made it easier for those other habits to do their job.

I still lift. I still walk. I want muscle. I want strength. **I want my body to be capable.** If your gym numbers fall off a cliff and stay there, you feel weak all day, or recovery is getting worse instead of better, look at whether you're eating enough before deciding you simply need more discipline.



Keep moving

Strength + walking



Eat enough

Hunger + energy



Watch recovery

Sleep + performance

Individual adaptation varies. Watch your own response.

PART FIVE: RUN YOUR OWN EXPERIMENT

By now you know enough to stop borrowing everybody else's rules and start paying attention to your own results. This part gives you a simple way to track what changes, recognize when you need help, learn from the messy parts, and decide whether carnivore is actually making your life better.

How do I know if this is actually working?

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Things I learned the hard way

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Your 30-day carnivore test drive

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If you remember one thing...

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How do I know if this is actually working?

Don't give the scale the only vote. I track weight, but I also use tape measurements, clothing fit, pain, swelling, energy, strength, cravings, digestion, and how I actually feel living my life. Carnivore caused a huge early water drop for me. I started around 174 pounds and lost close to ten pounds in the first several days. My body was shedding stored water as carbohydrate intake dropped. The slower changes mattered more—my clothes loosened. My waist and thighs lost inches. My ankles, arms, and calves reduced by centimeters. My thigh pain went away. My energy stabilized. I stopped obsessing over sugar. I got stronger in the gym. *Now those are the receipts I care about!*

Your quick daily check-in

Rate these once a day for the first couple of weeks. The goal is to spot trends over time instead of overreacting to one strange afternoon:

Use a 1–5 rating where 1 = rough and 5 = great.

Energy

Digestion

Physical comfort or pain

Mood

Hunger / cravings

Sleep quality

Notes

A one-minute check-in is enough. Remember, **you're looking for trends—not perfect data.**

Your weekly reality check

Once a week, ask yourself: What improved? What got worse? What feels easier? What keeps repeating? Am I eating enough? Do I want to change one variable? If body composition is one of your goals, weigh or measure on a schedule that doesn't make you crazy. Monthly photos, waist/thigh measurements, and strength progress can tell you things the daily scale can't.

I personally use my [AAHB Body Progress Tracker](#), a free spreadsheet I built to make those longer-term changes easier to see. You add one measurement session per row, and the dashboard automatically treats your earliest dated entry as your baseline and your latest as current. It shows change from baseline, change from your previous entry, and left-versus-right comparisons for measurements like your arms, thighs, knees, calves, and ankles.

Weight is stored in pounds, circumference measurements are entered in centimeters, and the dashboard can display circumference in centimeters or inches. The philosophy behind the tracker is simple...this is data, not a grade. If you want to track body changes alongside your carnivore experiment, this is exactly what I use.

Progress Dashboard

Your measurements at a glance

Current Snapshot	Change Since Baseline	Change Since Prior Entry
Latest date Weight Waist Hip Thigh avg	Weight Waist Hip Thigh avg Upper arm avg	Weight Waist Hip Thigh avg Upper arm avg

Current Left / Right Comparison

Measurement	Left	Right	L - R
Upper arm			
Thigh			
Knee			
Calf			
Ankle			

Open the linked [AAHB Body Progress Tracker](#) to add your measurements.

An optional faith check-in

What am I asking food or body change to prove? Where did I notice God's provision this week? Is this experiment helping me practice gratitude, honesty, and care? What am I ready to entrust to Christ today?

Prayer, Scripture, gratitude, lament, or surrender

Things I learned the hard way



More supplements weren't better

I began the lion diet with a cabinet full of supplements: magnesium glycinate, vitamin D, calcium, selenium, turmeric/curcumin, diosmin and hesperidin, and others I barely remember now. I stopped most of them because I wanted fewer variables. That simplicity taught me a lot. The magnesium/cramp story especially cured me of the idea that every symptom needs another capsule.



Dairy can be fine—and still wake up cravings

Milk didn't give me obvious digestive problems, but it triggered a very strong craving for more milk. The next day I wanted it badly, and my mood also felt noticeably more depressed and anxious. That was enough information for me to cut it back out.



Premium beef is not necessary...

I don't need ribeye every day. Sirloin, patties, chuck roast, top blade, eggs, salmon, and chicken work beautifully for me.



...And neither are fancy or complicated carnivore recipes

I do better when food is simple. Recreating every bread, pizza, cake, and snack in carnivore form keeps me thinking about food more than I want to.



Bad sleep is still bad sleep

Carnivore didn't make me invincible. If I sleep five hours, I can still feel tired. If I get sick, I can still be sick. I had strep throat while eating carnivore. Meat didn't hand me a force field. My bad days are simply better than they used to be.



Adaptation isn't a race

I felt pretty good quickly. Other people need longer. You don't get bonus points for suffering through symptoms just because someone online says they're “detox.” Use common sense and pay attention to your body.

Your 30-day carnivore test drive

If you want a simple starting structure, use this as a starting point. Adjust it around your hunger, schedule, budget, and the foods you tolerate best:

1

Before you start

Pick your version: broad carnivore or lion-style elimination. Buy enough food for several days. Decide what you're tracking. Take baseline measurements or labs if those matter to you. Move obvious temptation foods out of your immediate path if that will make the first week easier.

2

Days 1–7

Keep food simple. Eat enough. Salt your food. Drink to thirst. Use electrolytes if they clearly help, without turning them into a chemistry project. Expect water-weight movement. Notice cravings, digestion, energy, and sleep.

3

Days 8–14

Look for trends. Hunger may be changing. Food choices should feel easier. Exercise may be settling. If something feels off, change one variable at a time instead of rebuilding the whole diet in one afternoon.

4

Days 15–30

Keep going if you're learning something useful. If your goal is elimination, decide whether you want to stay strict or test one reintroduction. If your goal is general carnivore, refine your food rotation based on cost, hunger, digestion, and enjoyment.

5

Day 30: Take stock

Ask yourself what actually changed. How's your energy? Pain? Digestion? Hunger? Food noise? Weight or measurements? Sleep? Mood? Strength? Skin? Swelling? Blood sugar if you track it? How easy is the diet to live with? Then make a decision based on your own receipts. Keep going. Broaden the diet. Reintroduce foods. Change course. You've learned something either way.

If you remember one thing...



A recent photo of me and my husband, September 2026.

Carnivore looked extreme to me before I started. I expected repetition to drain joy from food. *Instead, I found a kind of freedom I didn't expect.* I enjoy my food, and meals can serve their purpose without managing my emotions all day. I can eat five eggs for breakfast because I like them, cook beef patties in eight minutes when I'm tired, make salmon because it tastes incredible, and move on with my day.

I started this because my legs hurt. I stayed because I felt good. Along the way, God has been teaching me that stewardship grows from love, truth, and daily surrender. My worth and future are secure in Christ. Carnivore remains a tool beneath that larger truth.

If you're standing on the edge wondering whether you could actually do this, **start simple. Eat enough. Pay attention. Give it a real chance.** Let your own body give you the next piece of information, and bring the unfinished parts to God. You are allowed to learn as you go. You are already loved while you learn. —

Bekah

Amino Acid Honey Buns

APPENDIX A: Build-your-own first grocery list

Use this as a starting point and cross out anything you don't like or tolerate.



Proteins: ground beef or patties; steak cuts you can afford; chuck roast; eggs; salmon or other fish; chicken thighs/wings; pork if desired.



Fats: butter; beef tallow; fat already attached to meat.



Flavor: salt; optional simple seasonings if you're doing broad carnivore rather than a strict elimination phase.



Optional: cheese/dairy; organ foods or organ supplement; meat sticks for travel; beef-protein powder for emergencies.



Equipment that makes life easier: air fryer; cast-iron or stainless skillet; pressure cooker/slow cooker; meat thermometer; freezer bags or vacuum sealer.

My grocery list

APPENDIX B: 14-day symptom and progress tracker

Use a 1-5 rating where 1 = rough and 5 = great.

Days 1-7

Day	Energy	Digestion	Comfort	Mood	Hunger/Cravings	Sleep	Notes
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							

Days 8–14

Day	Energy	Digestion	Comfort	Mood	Hunger/Cravings	Sleep	Notes
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							

APPENDIX C: Reintroduction log

Entry 1

Food tested

Date

Amount

Immediate response

Next-day response

Pain/swelling

Digestion

Cravings/food noise

Keep / pause / retest

Entry 2

Food tested

Date

Amount

Immediate response

Next-day response

Pain/swelling

Digestion

Cravings/food noise

Keep / pause / retest

APPENDIX C: Reintroduction log

Entry 3

Food tested

Date

Amount

Immediate response

Next-day response

Pain/swelling

Digestion

Cravings/food noise

Keep / pause / retest

Entry 4

Food tested

Date

Amount

Immediate response

Next-day response

Pain/swelling

Digestion

Cravings/food noise

Keep / pause / retest

APPENDIX D:

Sources and further reading

Direct carnivore research

R1. Carnivore Diet: A Scoping Review of the Current Evidence, Potential Benefits and Risks. *Nutrients*. 2026;18(2):348. PubMed PMID [41599961](#). The review found nine human studies and described possible benefits including weight reduction and satiety alongside unresolved long-term questions. R2. Lennerz BS, Mey JT, Henn OH, Ludwig DS. Behavioral Characteristics and Self-Reported Health Status among 2029 Adults Consuming a “Carnivore Diet.” *Current Developments in Nutrition*. 2021;5(12):nzab133. DOI: [10.1093/cdn/nzab133](#). Large self-selected social-media survey; 93% started for health reasons; high self-reported satisfaction and health improvements; LDL was elevated in the subset reporting lipids.

R3. Subjective Experiences and Blood Parameter Changes in Individuals From Germany Following a Self-Conceived “Carnivore Diet”: An Explorative Study. PubMed PMID [40385902](#). 2025. Small sample (n=24); most started for health reasons; triglyceride/A1c improvements in some participants; median total and LDL cholesterol increased substantially. R4. Goedeke S, Murphy T, Rush A, Zinn C. Assessing the Nutrient Composition of a Carnivore Diet: A Case Study Model. *Nutrients*. 2024;17(1):140. DOI: [10.3390/nu17010140](#). Modeled four hypothetical carnivore diets; many micronutrient targets were met while several depended strongly on food choices.

Low-carbohydrate / ketogenic evidence that helps explain common carnivore outcomes

R5. Goldenberg JZ, et al. Efficacy and safety of low and very low carbohydrate diets for type 2 diabetes remission: systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ*. 2021;372:m4743. DOI: [10.1136/bmj.m4743](#). R6. Soltani S, et al. Effect of carbohydrate restriction on body weight in overweight and obese adults: systematic review and dose-response meta-analysis of 110 randomized controlled trials. PubMed PMID [38125726](#). 2023. R7. Effects of ketogenic diet on health outcomes: an umbrella review of meta-analyses of randomized clinical trials. PubMed PMID [37231411](#). 2023. R8. Gibson AA, et al. Do ketogenic diets really suppress appetite? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Obesity Reviews*. 2015;16(1):64-76. PubMed PMID [25402637](#). R33. Skartun O, Smith CR, Laupsa-Borge J, Dankel SN. Symptoms during initiation of a ketogenic diet: a scoping review of occurrence rates, mechanisms and relief strategies. *Frontiers in Nutrition*. 2025;12:1538266. PubMed PMID [40206956](#). Reviews the cluster often called “keto flu,” including headache, dizziness/lightheadedness, fatigue, brain fog, muscle cramps/weakness, GI symptoms, and temporary exercise changes during early very-low-carb adaptation; sodium/water shifts are one plausible contributor.

R9. van der Schoot A, Drysdale C, Whelan K, Dimidi E. The Effect of Fiber Supplementation on Chronic Constipation in Adults: An Updated Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2022;116(4):953-969. PubMed PMID [35816465](#). R10. Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation. Malnutrition and IBD / What Should I Eat with Crohn’s or Colitis? Current patient guidance notes that high-fiber foods can be difficult for people with intestinal strictures and fiber amount/texture may need adjustment. R11. Malone JC, Daley SF. Elimination Diets. *StatPearls*. Updated 2026. PubMed PMID [38261686](#). Also see food intolerance literature describing symptom improvement after exclusion followed by gradual reintroduction (PMID 25471897).

R12. Biogenic Amines in Meat and Meat Products: A Review of the Science and Future Perspectives. *Foods*. 2022;11(6):788. PubMed PMID [35327210](#). Reviews histamine and other biogenic amines in meat, processing, and shelf-life. R13. NIH Office of Dietary Supplements. Magnesium: Health Professional Fact Sheet. Notes diarrhea, nausea, and cramping with high supplemental intake and a 350 mg/day adult upper limit from supplements/medications unless medically directed. R14. NIH Office of Dietary Supplements. Vitamin A and Carotenoids: Health Professional Fact Sheet. Adult upper limit for preformed vitamin A is 3,000 mcg RAE/day.

R15. NIH Office of Dietary Supplements. Potassium: Health Professional Fact Sheet. Provides food-composition examples showing meaningful potassium in beef, salmon, and other animal foods. R16. NIH Office of Dietary Supplements. Vitamin C: Health Professional Fact Sheet. Reviews vitamin C requirements and scurvy risk with prolonged very low intake.

Gut microbiome

R27. Karačić A, et al. Long-term adherence to the carnivore diet and its impact on the gut microbiota: a cross-sectional study. *Microbiota and Host*. 2026;4(1):MAH250015. DOI: [10.1530/MAH-25-0015](https://doi.org/10.1530/MAH-25-0015). Ten healthy long-term carnivores (average about 36 months) were compared with 874 matched omnivores. Overall alpha-diversity metrics weren't significantly different; Chao1 richness was significantly higher in carnivores. Microbiome composition and predicted function differed substantially between groups.

R28. Karačić A, et al. The gut microbiome without any plant food? A case study on the gut microbiome of a healthy carnivore. 2024. *Microbiota and Host*. 2024;2(1), DOI [10.1530/MAH-24-0006](https://doi.org/10.1530/MAH-24-0006) Compared a healthy man after four years of strict carnivore eating with matched omnivore controls; his alpha diversity was within the healthy omnivore range. R29. David LA, et al. Diet rapidly and reproducibly alters the human gut microbiome. *Nature*. 2014;505:559-563. DOI: [10.1038/nature12820](https://doi.org/10.1038/nature12820). Short-term all-animal and all-plant diets rapidly changed microbiome composition and function, demonstrating how quickly gut microbes adapt to food inputs.

R30. Wang S, et al. The impact of very-low-calorie ketogenic diets on gut microbiota in individuals with obesity: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Gut Microbes*. 2025;17(1):2566305. PubMed PMID [41054273](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41054273/). Fourteen studies were included; pooled analyses found increases in Shannon diversity and Faith's phylogenetic diversity, increased *Akkermansia*, and decreased *Bifidobacterium*. This is ketogenic rather than direct carnivore evidence, but it helps show that severe carbohydrate restriction doesn't consistently reduce overall microbiome diversity.

Hair changes after major weight loss

R31. Kang D-H, et al. Telogen Effluvium Associated With Weight Loss: A Single Center Retrospective Study. *Annals of Dermatology*. 2024;36(6):384-388. PubMed PMID [39623615](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39623615/). Rapid or substantial weight loss can trigger temporary diffuse hair shedding (telogen effluvium). A broader review also identifies sudden weight loss as a well-recognized physiologic trigger for telogen effluvium (PubMed PMID [33541773](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33541773/)).

Lipedema research relevant to my story

R17-LIP. Effect of a ketogenic diet on pain and quality of life in patients with lipedema: The LIPODIET pilot study. PubMed PMID [35949278](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35949278/). Nine women completed seven weeks of LCHF followed by a higher-carbohydrate Nordic-pattern phase; pain fell during LCHF and returned toward baseline after the switch despite maintained weight loss. R18-LIP. Effect of a low-carbohydrate diet on pain and quality of life in female patients with lipedema: a randomized controlled trial. PubMed PMID [38627016](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38627016/). 2024. Seventy women with lipedema and obesity; the low-carb group had greater weight loss and greater pain reduction than the control diet.

R19-LIP. Changes in Vascular, Lymphatic, Inflammatory, and Lipid Mediators During a 7-Month Calorie-Restricted Low-Carbohydrate, High-Fat Dietary Intervention in Women with Lipedema: A Preliminary Prospective Study. PubMed PMID [42123982](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42123982/). 2026. Reported reductions in BMI, leg volume, pain, and several inflammatory/endothelial markers; preliminary design.

Human dietary history and plant compounds

R17. Pontzer H, et al. Effects of Evolution, Ecology, and Economy on Human Diet: Insights from Hunter-Gatherers and Other Small-Scale Societies. *Annual Review of Nutrition*. 2021;41:363-385. PubMed PMID [34138633](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34138633/). Human diets vary widely; cold-climate, fishing, and pastoral groups tend toward greater animal-food reliance. R18. East-Greenland traditional nutrition: a reanalysis of the Inuit energy balance and macronutrient consumption from Høygård nutritional data (1936–1937). PMC8172218. Uses historic data including seal, fish, birds, organs, and blubber. R32. Arctic/Inuit historical diet sources: Little M, et al. Drivers and health implications of the dietary transition among Inuit in the Canadian Arctic: a scoping review. *Public Health Nutrition*. 2021. PubMed PMID [32914743](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32914743/); traditional foods included land mammals, marine mammals, fish, shellfish, birds, eggs, seaweed, and berries. Additional Alaska-specific context comes from University of Alaska reviews of Iñupiat food systems and published work on Nunamiut subsistence around Anaktuvuk Pass, where caribou was a dominant food source; North Slope coastal Iñupiat traditionally relied heavily on bowhead whale, seal, walrus, fish, and caribou. R19. A Comprehensive Review of Antinutrients in Plant-Based Foods and Their Key Ingredients. PubMed PMID [39895386](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39895386/). 2025. Reviews phytate, lectins, oxalate, tannins, saponins, enzyme inhibitors, and other compounds, including both adverse and potentially beneficial effects.

R20. Contradictory dual role of antinutrients in nutrient inhibition and anti-aging: A comprehensive review. PubMed PMID [41177268](#). 2026. Reviews nutrient-binding effects and potential benefits; reinforces that “antinutrient” effects depend on context.

Exercise

R21. Effects of the Ketogenic Diet on Strength Performance in Trained Men and Women: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. PubMed PMID [39064644](#). 2024. No significant difference in squat or bench 1-RM performance between ketogenic and comparison diets. Additional context: International Society of Sports Nutrition position stand: ketogenic diets. PubMed PMID [38934469](#). 2024. Ketogenic diets tend to have neutral or detrimental effects on athletic performance overall, with sport/task differences.

Lipids

R22. Ference BA, et al. Low-density lipoproteins cause atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease. 1. Evidence from genetic, epidemiologic, and clinical studies. European Heart Journal. 2017;38(32):2459-2472. DOI: [10.1093/eurheartj/ehx144](#). Large consensus synthesis supporting the causal role of LDL/ApoB-containing particles in ASCVD.

Community sources and repeated patterns

C1. Budget. Community discussions reviewed for this guide repeatedly recommend ground beef, eggs, chuck roast, bulk freezing, and cheaper cuts instead of premium steaks. C2. Organs. Long-running carnivore discussions show genuine disagreement: some people feel better with organs; many long-term carnivores report eating none. Useful community conclusion: organs are nutrient-dense, but there's no community consensus that they are mandatory. C3. Electrolytes. Beginner discussions repeatedly mention headaches, cramps, weakness, and diarrhea alongside widely varying advice about salt, potassium, and magnesium. The disagreement itself is useful: electrolyte needs and supplement tolerance vary, so symptoms shouldn't automatically trigger escalating doses.

C4. Food noise/cravings. Carnivore community discussions include many reports of cravings fading after one to several weeks, alongside people whose cravings persist. Common practical suggestions include eating enough, avoiding habitual sweet tastes, and carrying simple carnivore food when away from home. C5. Histamine/freshness. Experienced carnivores frequently report better tolerance of fresh or quickly frozen meat and more symptoms with leftovers, aged meat, cured meat, or certain ground meat. These are community observations; the research supports biogenic-amine accumulation with storage and processing but doesn't validate every mechanism proposed in community discussions.

C6. Reported benefits. Repeated carnivore community discussions describe improvements in energy, satiety, food cravings, mental clarity, sleep, digestive symptoms, skin conditions, joint pain, strength/endurance, mood, and weight/body composition. The discussions reviewed for this guide also included repeated reports of changes in hair and nail quality. Those improvements are common anecdotes but not universal; some people report temporary shedding or brittle nails, so they should remain community observations rather than promises.