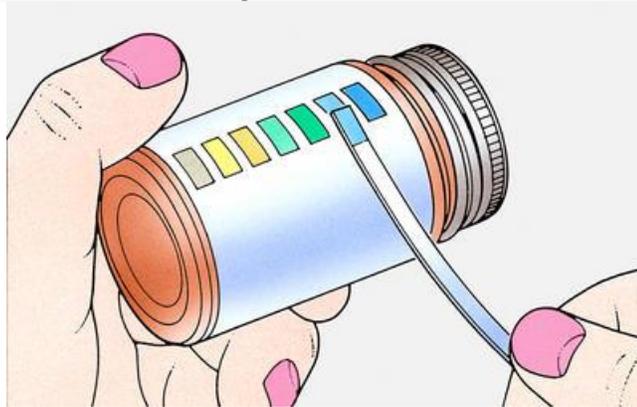


Women's Health

What Are Ketone Strips—And Can They Help You Lose Weight?

Listen up, ketogenic dieters.

BY CHARLOTTE HILTON ANDERSEN February 1, 2018



Would you pee on a tiny strip of paper once a day in the name of weight loss?

Believe it or not, that's what some followers of the ketogenic diet are doing to ensure they shed pounds.

Some background: The ketogenic diet is the hottest low-carb diet right now, with proponents saying that it helps them lose weight quickly without hunger. The diet calls for getting 70 to 80 percent or more of your total calories from fat and eating fewer than 50 grams of carbs (the equivalent of two bananas) per day, explains Ashley Cuellar Gilmore, M.D., gastroenterologist and program director for IU Health Medical Weight Loss.

Why so low? Because, unlike many other low-carb diets, it's centered around achieving ketosis. And to see all the purported benefits of going keto, you have to get in ketosis and stay there for an extended period. (Though, Gilmore notes that the benefits of the diet don't always outweigh the risks; talk to your doctor before making an attempt at ketosis.)

One of the simplest ways to find out if you're in ketosis is by peeing on a tiny piece of paper called a ketone strip.

The Basics of Ketosis

First things first: What is ketosis?

Ketosis occurs when you have used up all your body's glucose stores (translation: sugar from carbohydrates) and your body switches to metabolizing fat for energy instead, says **Adam Splaver, M.D., of NanoHealth Associates in Hollywood, Florida.**

So, when people say they're "in ketosis," they mean they've depleted their glucose stores completely and are now primarily burning fat.

But how do you know you're in ketosis, exactly? That's where ketone strips come in.

So What Exactly Are Ketone Strips?

Ketone tests are strips that you pee on, similar to pregnancy tests, that test the levels of a particular type of ketone, called acetoacetate, in your urine, Gilmore says.

The levels of acetoacetate in your urine roughly indicate the levels in your blood, helping you gauge your level of ketosis. Most people are considered "in ketosis" when their blood ketones measure 0.5 mM/dL. However, the optimal range for maximum fat-burning is between 1.5 to 3.0 mM/dL, she says.

Using the strips is pretty simple. Ketone tests come in either sticks (that you hold in your urine stream) or strips (that you dunk in a cup of your urine). They're covered with a paper specially formulated to react in the presence of ketones by turning a different color. Because they can't give you a number measurement, like a blood test, most ketone strips or sticks come with a color chart to help you estimate what level of ketosis you're in—the darker the color, the higher the level of ketosis.

They're not foolproof, however. The levels of acetoacetate in your urine only roughly mimic the ketone levels in your blood, which are the ones most indicative of ketosis. In addition, your hydration levels can affect the concentration of ketones in your urine, giving you an inaccurate reading, Gilmore explains.

However, while urine ketone strips are not great for getting an exact measure of your ketone levels, they can be useful if you're simply trying to see if you're limiting your carbs enough to get into some level of ketosis, she says.

Ready Your Bladder!

Ketone strips can be found at any drug store and many supermarkets and usually run between \$5 and \$15 for a package. Here are three popular options you can find online:

- 1. Smackfat Ketone Strips:** These strips are cost-effective, come with a color guide right on the bottle, and work great for people new to ketogenic dieting, according to the 4,500 positive reviews. (\$9.95/100 strips, Amazon)
- 2. Nurse Hatty Ketone Strips:** Even though these are one of the cheapest ketone strips they still do the job well, with nearly 2,000 positive ratings. They're no-frills but do you need to get fancy with something you're just going to pee on? (\$6.95/150 strips, Amazon)
- 3. Keto Nutrition Ketone Strips:** These "professional-grade" strips show your results clearly for easier color matching. (\$8.95, Amazon)

If you do use ketone strips, for the most accurate results make sure to follow the directions exactly and only use kits that aren't past the expiration date.

Do You Really Need To Test Your Ketones?

Since the difference between following a keto diet and any 'ole low-carb diet is the ketosis part, it makes sense to stay on top of your levels with ketone testing strips. But, no, testing is definitely not necessary, **Splaver** says.

"If you find ketone strips fun or motivating you can use them, but you can do the diet just fine without them," he says. After all, if you follow the ketogenic diet's macro guidelines, you're pretty much guaranteed to achieve ketosis anyway. (And, if you really need affirmation that you've hit ketosis, fruity or rotten-apple-smelling breath is a surefire sign that you're there.)

Plus, if you take ketone strips too seriously, they might even hurt your progress, says **Splaver**. Because ketone strips aren't completely accurate, it's possible to be in ketosis even if your test results say otherwise—making you feel frustrated and more likely to give up, he says. Meanwhile, testing your urine multiple times per day can get really overwhelming, while setting you up for obsessive thoughts and behaviors around food, he says.

Basically, for a diet that's already known for being super strict, ketone strips can take things to a whole new level of intense.

<https://www.womenshealthmag.com/weight-loss/ketone-strips>