



OFF MENU

The other four-letter word

BY NATALIE MARTINEZ

While there are many goals to set for the next 12 months, weight loss and health-oriented ones remain at the top of the list.

According to the market research tool, Polly, 71% of approximately 275,000 participants surveyed set a weight loss and exercise goal for 2020.

“Diet” is considered another four-letter word that causes stress and insecurity. Add in strict restrictions and rules, and it’s no wonder most fail due to lack of enthusiasm. To put it frankly, it’s just not fun.

However, the diet industry has once again sparked a trend that brings the appeal of losing weight paired with eating all the fried meats and cheeses one desires. The keto—short for ketogenic—diet was a buzz-worthy sensation of 2019, and it’s not stopping anytime soon. Women’s magazines, internet ads and Instagram hashtags have been inundated with keto recipes and stories of fast weight loss while eating juicy steaks covered in butter, coconut oil-laden coffees, pork rind nachos and all the bacon you could ever desire. What’s not to love?

But there’s good reason not to jump too quickly on the keto bandwagon.

Foods commonly eaten on the keto diet include high amounts of protein and saturated fat, including red meat, butter, bacon, fried foods and whole milk dairy products such as cheese and heavy creams. Excess meat and whole milk dairy products often contain high amounts of saturated fat, and there are a plethora of studies showing the correlations between high cholesterol, high blood pressure and heart disease, a leading cause of death for women.

On the other hand, foods forbidden on the diet include fiber-rich whole grains, sweet potatoes, starchy vegetables and fruit, which often contain antioxidants and are wonderful sources of vitamins and minerals.

“The ketogenic diet lacks the nutrition your body needs to function effectively,” said local dietitian Martha Lawder. “While some have found success with the diet and weight loss, I would question the potentially negative

long-term effects it may have on their metabolic function.”

Harvard’s School of Public Health has also questioned the long-term effects, because there are not many studies available. Business Insider also named keto as the worst diet of the year based on health risks.

“A diet rich in vegetables, fruits and whole grains provides the nutrients that your body needs for healthy metabolic function,” Lawder said. “Without them, it’s like going to the store and forgetting your shopping list. You can sort of do it, but not very well.” As a dietitian, Lawder also emphasizes the importance of fiber for women’s health with 25 grams the minimum daily amount, easily found in grains such as farro, barley and brown rice.

“Nutrition isn’t a one size fits all thing, so don’t stress if something works for someone else and doesn’t work for you,” Lawder said. “Think about your long-term health goals, and make a sustainable plan that will get you there in the healthiest way possible.” □

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