

SHOULD THE KETOGENIC DIET BE ADVISED FOR ADULTS? YES

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At least one-third of adults have seizures that do not completely respond to medical therapy, and some of these individuals suffer from severe focal or generalized seizures that produce injury and severely impair quality of life. Many of these patients are not candidates for surgery and medications confer limited benefit. In this circumstance, the ketogenic diet may be employed as an adjunctive therapy. While implementation of this diet requires great discipline and attention to detail, perhaps 50% of adults can experience a significant improvement in seizure frequency and severity, which in some cases can persist after the diet is discontinued. Efficacy has been demonstrated both in localization-related (focal) and symptomatic generalized epilepsies. Efficacy is generally seen within 1-2 months, and patients and their caregivers can rather quickly determine whether maintaining the ketogenic diet is worthwhile. The adverse effects of the diet can be managed with proper attention to nutrition, initiating the diet in the hospital over 3-4 days with careful measurement of metabolic parameters. To summarize, for well-selected, motivated adults, the ketogenic diet is a reasonable therapeutic option when medications have failed.