



# The Stall Slayer

Eight Roadblocks  
to Keto Fat Loss  
and What to Do  
About Them



By Amy Berger, MS, CNS

# About the Author

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Amy Berger, MS, CNS, is a U.S. Air Force veteran and Certified Nutrition Specialist who specializes in using low-carbohydrate and ketogenic nutrition to help people reclaim their vitality through eating delicious foods, and showing them that getting and staying well don't require starvation, deprivation, or living at the gym. Her motto is, "Real people need real food!" She has a master's degree in human nutrition and blogs at [www.tuitnutrition.com](http://www.tuitnutrition.com), where she writes about a wide range of health and nutrition-related topics, such as insulin, metabolism, weight loss, diabetes, thyroid function, and more. She has presented internationally on these issues and is the author of *The Alzheimer's Antidote: Using a Low-Carb, High-Fat Diet to Fight Alzheimer's Disease, Memory Loss, and Cognitive Decline*.



## Where to find Amy:

**Website:** <http://www.tuitnutrition.com/>

**Book:** *The Alzheimer's Antidote: Using a Low-Carb, High-Fat Diet to Fight Alzheimer's Disease, Memory Loss, and Cognitive Decline* (Available on Amazon)

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# Introduction

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As a keto-friendly nutritionist, stalled fat loss is one of the most common reasons people contact me for help. Every week I get multiple inquiries from people who've started a ketogenic diet and have either not lost any weight at all, or who lost a bit at first but whose weight hasn't budged in weeks or months. This can be demoralizing and disheartening when the internet is full of astonishing before and after photos and it seems like weight is magically melting off everyone but you.

It's maddening when you think you're doing everything right and the scale isn't moving. You spend every free second lurking on forums and scrolling through Instagram feeds where people post miraculous-seeming weight loss transformations, trying to figure out what they're doing that you're not.

What are their macros? Do they fast? What about exercise? Do they take any supplements? What about MCT oil or exogenous ketones? Do they eat fat bombs? Drink fatty coffees? When you see someone getting the results you're working so hard for and *not* getting, it's only natural to want to know all their secrets. If you do exactly what they're doing, it'll work for you, too, right? *It has to.*

Not so fast.

As human beings, we all have a lot more in common than we have different. Much more unites us than divides us, especially when



Stalled? You're not alone.

we're talking about the biochemistry and physiology of the human body. Black, White, Asian, African, Hispanic, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, tall, short, male, female, blonde, brunette, or redhead: we all have kidneys, we all have a liver, we all have a pancreas. We all secrete insulin. We all make cholesterol. And we can all burn fat and make ketones.

But that doesn't mean we're exactly the same. We have different genetics, different medical and dietary histories, hormone levels, stress loads, geographic environments, and other factors that affect metabolism and weight regulation. This means that just because something works for someone else doesn't mean it's going to work equally well for you. Learning from other people's success is a good place to start and can be helpful, but ultimately, you have to figure out what's going to work for you.

If I had to make an estimate, I'd say about 80% of the time I spend with clients is devoted to mythbusting and setting the record straight about how keto works. Low carb and ketogenic diets have exploded in popularity the last few years, which is great to see. And because they're so popular, there's a ton of information out there about them now—much more than there was when I was new to this. Unfortunately, along with all the good and trustworthy information, there's a lot of misleading nonsense and *misinformation* that can lead people astray. If you're new to this, it can be hard to know what's reliable and what's better off ignored.

With that in mind, before I go any further, I should probably tell you a little about myself and how I got into all this.

## My Story

I've been following a carb-restricted way of eating for over fifteen years. I'm not always strictly ketogenic, but I'm always low carb. I bounce in and out of ketosis naturally, depending on what I'm eating or *not* eating, but I don't always aim to be in a state of deep ketosis by keeping carbs extremely low. I guess the best way to say

it is, I never have a breakfast of pancakes and orange juice, but I'm not afraid of carrots and I don't think a tablespoon of hummus once in a while is going to kill me. I'm always fat-adapted—that is, my carbs are always low enough that I'm not riding the blood sugar and insulin rollercoasters anymore, and I can go several hours comfortably without eating, and I don't get irritable, shaky, or "hangry"—the combination of hungry and angry most of us remember very well from our life before keto. So I'm always low carb; sometimes ketogenic, sometimes not.

I started eating low carb primarily for fat loss. I was a chubby kid who grew into an overweight teenager and then into an overweight young adult. I was a couch potato as a child—my favorite activity was to curl up on a comfy couch with a book and read. (It still is.) Plus, my parents—*get this*—owned an ice cream store. I was literally "a kid in a candy store." Put those two together and you have a blueprint for a chubby child.

As I got older, I became unhappy with my size and shape. (Show me a girl raised in the 1980s and 1990s who *wasn't*.) In an attempt to lose weight, I became more physically active and paid attention to my diet. I even took up running (okay, to be honest, it was really more of a slow jog), and doubled-down on cutting fat out of my diet.

I did what I thought were "all the right things"—I did lots of exercise and ate my share of whole grains (whole wheat toast with light margarine was a frequent breakfast, as was fat-free cereal with skim milk), brown rice, low-fat or fat-free yogurt, pasta, and I knew I was doing good for myself by *baking* frozen breaded chicken nuggets & fries instead of frying them in oil. (Ha! If I knew then what I know now...) I snacked on cereal, pretzels, granola bars, crackers, and other low- and no-fat foods.

Despite the increased exercise, I didn't lose weight. In fact, very, very much increased exercise didn't do it for me either. At one point in my early twenties, I was unemployed and had lots of free time on my hands. I exercised twice a day, two hours in the morning and another two hours at night, and I *still* had no fat loss. I even trained

for and completed a marathon, thinking there was no way I could do all that running and not lose weight. Well, the joke was on me, and I have the pudgy finish line photos to prove it! (In fact, I didn't learn the lesson well enough the first time and I ran a second marathon before it sunk in that running wasn't the answer to making me magically thin.)

I was fortunate that the only thing driving me toward low carb was weight loss. I had no health issues that I knew of at the time, but I have a family history of obesity, type 2 diabetes (T2D), cancer, and stroke, so

the deck was stacked against me. There's no doubt in my mind that if I hadn't found low carb when I did, and if I'd kept on eating the way I was when I was younger—even though I *thought* I had a healthy diet—now I would likely be living with T2D, PCOS, obesity, and who knows what else.

I stumbled into the world of low carb via the book, *Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution*. (This was an updated version of *Dr. Atkins' Diet Revolution*, a.k.a. "the Atkins book," originally published in 1972.) My mother had picked it up at a yard sale! (Do people even still have those?) She never got around to reading it, but I did.

The Atkins book *made sense*. It was different—very *different*—from everything I thought I knew about nutrition and especially about how to lose weight. But since everything "I knew" had gotten me exactly nowhere, I figured I had nothing to lose by giving it a try—



Me, running the Pittsburgh Marathon, 2001. Thanks for nothing, carb loading!



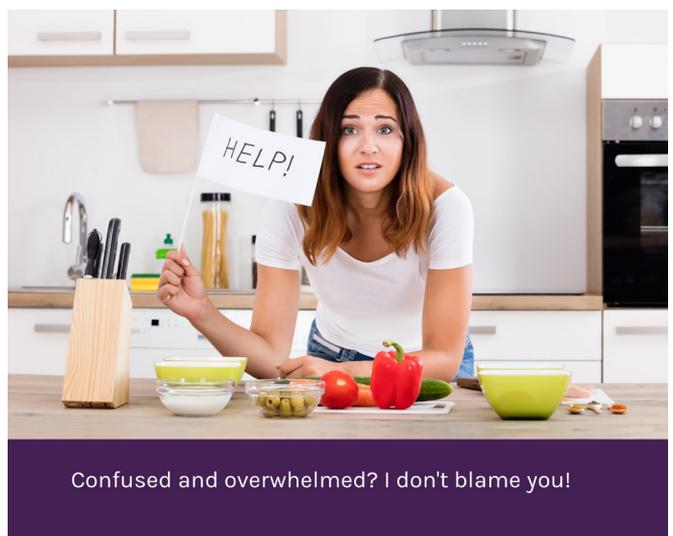
Me, 2014. Still exercising regularly, but diet was the biggest change -- a low carb diet.

except a few pounds, maybe! You know what they say: "It's so crazy, it just might work."

This was around 1999, still smack-dab in the middle of the low-fat era, when "everyone knew" red meat, butter, egg yolks, and bacon were a heart attack waiting to happen. I remember the first time I put heavy cream in my coffee instead of skim milk: it was so rich and luxurious; I remember wondering if I would be able to feel it clogging my arteries immediately or if it would take a little while before it killed me. Well, 20 years later, here I am with no indicators whatsoever that my cardiovascular system is about to give out. (In case you're wondering why the math doesn't add up here, I didn't actually *stick with* low carb for the long term until 2003. I was in college in 1999 and I guess I just wasn't prepared to make that kind of change permanently. It took a few more years for it to sink in that my body simply doesn't do well with lots of starch and sugar—and that no amount of running would overcome that.)

When I first started learning about low carb, there was only one online forum and two or three books—that I knew of, anyway. A couple of books about diets high in fat and protein were published in the 1960s and even earlier (as far back as the 1800s, actually), but none ever attained the popularity of the Atkins book. (The other books I knew of at the time were *Protein Power*—still an excellent read, and *The Schwarzbein Principle*.)

The fact that there was so much less information about low carb and keto back then can be seen as a blessing and a curse. There



Confused and overwhelmed? I don't blame you!

was less information, but there was also less of that misleading and potentially counterproductive *misinformation*. Sometimes less is more, and that was certainly the case here. I don't envy you if you're new to this right now. The sheer amount of information—the websites, blogs, videos, forums, and feeds—can be totally overwhelming, especially because a lot of it contradicts itself. You read something on one person's blog, and someone else says the complete opposite in a video the next day. I'm not sure I would be able to sort through it all and even *get started* if I were brand new now. So, if you feel confused, stressed out, frustrated, and overwhelmed, you're not alone! (More on this issue in chapter 12.)

When I was new to this, there were no blood or breath ketone meters. MCT oil was not available to the general public. You had to be in a scientific study if you wanted to get supplemental exogenous ketones, and you couldn't drink them; researchers had to infuse beta-hydroxybutyrate directly into your blood. Coconut oil wasn't sold at most supermarkets in the US because there was basically no market for it back then—who in their right mind would buy a jar of mostly saturated fat? (Are you *trying* to kill yourself?!) There were no "macro calculators," no fat bomb recipes, and Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Reddit *didn't even exist*.

I didn't understand as much of the biochemistry and physiology around keto as I do now, but the thing is, you don't have to understand the science for keto to work for you. All I knew was that I needed to keep my carbs really low. I didn't need to count calories, weigh or measure my food, or do much of *anything*

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besides keeping my total carbohydrate intake very low. I followed the Atkins plan as originally written, and *it worked*. I used the urine test strips to make sure my carbs were low enough to keep me in ketosis, and what do you know...*fat loss!* No more obsessively thinking about my next meal. No more sugar cravings. No more fantasizing about food all day. I was born and raised in New York City and I haven't had a bagel in over a decade.

My point is, long before I studied nutrition formally and became a professional nutritionist, I had success with low carb. Long before I had a deeper understanding of the metabolic processes and biochemical feedback loops responsible for oxidizing fat and glucose, or storing and mobilizing fat, I did *just fine*. You need to understand only a few fundamental principles in order for this way of eating to work for you. You don't need a PhD and you don't need to go to medical school. You don't need apps, meters, food scales, or any other high-tech gadgets, although these things do have their place in certain circumstances, and I'll cover those later on. Overall, though, as with so many things in life, the truth is, the most effective approach is to keep it simple.

In the chapters that follow, I'll walk you through the most common roadblocks to fat loss on ketogenic or low carb diets, and *what to do about them*. I'll provide some basic information on how and why ketogenic diets work when your goal is fat loss, dispel some myths that might be interfering with your fat loss goals, and offer advice on how to course-correct to start getting the results you want. Sometimes all it takes is a small change for things to start going more smoothly.