

A sunburst graphic with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating from a central point behind the text.

Healthy Moms Podcast

BY **Wellness Mama**[®]
simple answers for healthier families

Episode 116: How to Reboot Your Metabolism
Using the Keto Reset Diet With Mark Sisson

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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Katie: Hi and welcome to the Healthy Mom's Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and I'm so excited about today's interview because I'm here with one of my mentors and someone I have looked up to in the online space for a really long time. Mark Sisson is the bestselling author of the "Primal Blueprint." His blog, "Mark's Daily Apple," helps thousands of people daily and, most importantly, he's really paved the way for a lot of what we know about health right now and for his primal enthusiast to challenge conventional wisdom, to change their lives and to get healthier. He is super well respected in the health and wellness movement and I'm so honored that he's here with us. Welcome Mark.

Mark: Hey, thanks Katie. Great to be here.

Katie: I'm so excited. In fact, you'd be proud. I just had lunch and I had a big ass salad with sardines. I really have implemented a lot of what you've talked about. And you were one of my really early influences in switching to a healthier lifestyle. So thank you and thank you for being here.

Mark: Well, thank you for taking the information and running with it literally. I mean, you've just done incredible things in your, you know, with your blog and your podcast and everything. I'm really proud of you.

Katie: Thank you. That means so much. And today I'd love to...well, I'd love to get into a lot of topics. But to start for sure I wanna delve into keto because every time I talk about...like I ask my audience, "What do you guys want to hear in the podcasts?" They always have questions about keto. And I've seen people do keto a lot of different ways and some of them they concern me the way that some people will take keto and run with it. So I'd love to start with the beginning. You just have an amazing book come out about this, "The Keto Reset," which is a great resource. But I'd love to like really walk people through this. So to start off, let's define keto.

When we say that, I think it has a lot of different meanings in today's world. What does it actually mean and how do you define it?

Mark: Well, how I define it is using the body's own internal wisdom, the genetic blueprint that we have, to create greater metabolic flexibility and metabolic efficiency. Now what that looks like is you become better at burning fat and by, almost by definition, you become better at burning off your own stored body fat and using that for fuel and then using that fat to create another type of fuel called ketones which the brain can run on. And in so doing you trend toward an ideal body composition. You trend toward better energy levels throughout the day because you have literally improved your metabolic efficiency. You're better at extracting energy from all types of substrate whether that's fats, glucose, ketones, maybe even a little bit of protein. And, ultimately, and probably my favorite benefit is that it regulates appetite cravings and hunger to the extent that those things no longer dictate how your day goes from meal to meal.

Katie: Yea, and that's huge. And I think along with the keto type diet, there's obviously the state of ketosis which is a kind of different but related thing. So can you explain what ketosis is and how it relates to a diet?

Mark: Yeah, right. So, you know, it is a little bit confusing if you're new to this whole thing because these terms keto, ketogenic, ketosis, they all sort of play in a space that looks at what the liver does with fat to create ketone bodies. But, basically, the initial definition of ketosis is a state in which your body is making more ketones than it can burn. And this is not a bad thing. It's actually a good thing to the extent that you want to get rid of some of your stored body fat.

So when you cut carbohydrates and you create the necessity of the body to have to replace those carbohydrates, which they're gonna convert to glucose into another type of fuel, you create the necessity for the body to take fat out of storage, burn the fat, the fatty acids in the muscle, and then take some of the fat and make ketones. The end result of this is that your liver is creating this fuel called ketones. And as the ketones rise in your blood stream we can measure it. We can measure it with blood ketone strips which are pretty accurate, with a breath meter that measures acetone. Or we can measure it on urine strips that some people are familiar with, the more purple the strip turns, the more ketones are in your urine for instance.

And so this notion that ketosis is an excess of ketones in the blood stream has kind of driven some people to think well, that's the goal. The goal must be to make more ketones, and it's really not. The goal is not to make more ketones. The goal is to become really good at burning fat. And in the process, you make ketones, but as you become more metabolically efficient, as you become metabolically flexible, the body then adapts to the requirements and says, "You know, we've built the metabolic machinery to burn fats. That's great. We've built the metabolic machinery to burn ketones especially in the brain. And so now even though we run very efficiently on ketones, we don't need to make a lot of ketones. We can become very efficient and just make enough ketones to fuel the brain."

And so, over time, the longer people spend in ketosis, the lower their ketone levels become because they become so adapted to the state of burning fat and generating ketones just to the extent that they need them. People who are new to keto and new to ketosis and are all excited about, "Oh, I'm gonna just generate all these great ketones and I'm gonna pee them out and that'll be loss of energy, and that'll help me with my weight loss goals," that does happen. That's an inefficient use of ketones from the beginning. But, again, as more time goes by, as you spend weeks in keto, that adaptation takes place where the body says, "We don't

need to waste these ketones. Let's just make enough just to fuel the brain."

And so just back to the original question, which is, you know, what is ketosis? So ketosis is that state where there's an excess of ketones in the blood stream but kind of the irony is the better you get at restricting carbohydrates the more efficient you become...to some extent, the fewer ketones your body needs to make. And so you become dialed into this really cool little space where because you become efficient your hunger and your appetite get mitigated and you don't, you know, you don't feel ravenous ever for the most part and certainly not all the time like so many people are used to doing. Cravings, particularly cravings for sweets, disappear. They don't disappear. I mean, look, they're wired in everybody but they diminish tremendously. And you achieve this kind of cool state of steady state energy. You don't get sick, if at all, certainly not very often. You maintain muscle mass or you can build muscle mass in this state.

It's a pretty cool place to be and that's the essence of my Keto Reset Diet is to use this ancient wisdom that's imbedded in our DNA to bring out the best of our metabolic efficiency and metabolic flexibility so that we can, you know, be in that state of great energy...perfect body composition or ideal body composition I should say and, you know, like sleeping better. I mean, that was one of the things I noticed about being keto. I did a two-month deep dive into keto in preparation for this book. And I found out that I actually needed like a half hour less sleep every night. It's probably because ketones are such...are much more efficient fuel for the brain to get its work done at night when you're sleeping. So, anyway, does that answer your question about ketosis? I don't even know if we addressed that fully.

Katie: Yeah, it does. And I think for the women listening that the only time they may have really heard of ketones especially in the urine like you mentioned would be potentially during pregnancy because they test your urine for the presence of sugar and ketones. And it's interesting what you said about kind of your body finding that balance because that was certainly my experience. I was pregnant when I first really started delving into natural health, and learning things like that your baby feeds on your blood sugar. And if you want a huge baby you should eat lots of sugar but if you...like most people don't want a huge baby and would rather birth a smaller baby, it's good to avoid too much carbohydrates. So I made that switch during pregnancy and then I continued that throughout my other pregnancies. But that first one it was like there was a big spike of ketones in the urine for the first few weeks. And then it evened out even though I was still eating relatively low carbohydrate.

Mark: That's a perfect example of how it happens. You know, when you initially switch the information because this is...look, food is information to the body. Every bite of food has a hormonal impact on the body and that depends a lot on the macros, the fat, protein, carbohydrate, composition of that food. It also has something to do with the quality of that food. If they're, you know, nasty, industrial seed oils or trans fats that's gonna have a different impact. So every bite of food we eat provides information to the body and if you go for a long period of time without consuming copious amounts of carbohydrates, and if you dramatically reduce the carbohydrates, that's information so the body can say, "Whoa, I guess we're not gonna be getting this regular source of glucose every couple of hours so we need to alter the metabolism and adjust the engine, if you will, adjust the metabolic machinery to become better at burning fat, to create more ketones, to send those ketones to the brain, so the brain doesn't need that much glucose. It can exist quite nicely on mostly ketones."

And the initial reaction to the body is, "Whoop, whoop, whoop, whoop, we'd better..." you know, all alarms go off. "We gotta make a lot of ketones, gotta make a lot of ketones." And then over time the body kind of settles

in and says, "We don't need to make that many ketones. Now we know we're good at making ketones." Katie, did you know the liver can make 150 grams of ketones a day? That's just mind boggling to me. That is so much energy that's coming directly from fat. That's like 700 calories worth of fuel made internally in a closed loop system. You don't need to eat at all to make 750 calories worth of fuel that the brain can use and then to certainly burn 80% or 90% of all the required energy that you need for your muscles from your stored body fat. It's an amazing system that we evolved. I mean, it's how humans survived for millions of years.

Look, back in the day, 100,000 years ago, a million years ago, whatever, you know, you came across food and the brain was wired to over eat that food. That's how we're wired because who knows when there's gonna be another supply of food? So we developed this really efficient and elegant system of storing excess calories as fuel in the form of body fat. Well, somewhere along the line we kind of lost the other part of that ability which is to take it out of storage and burn it as fuel just as efficiently as we stored it. And that's what we teach with the Keto Reset Diet.

Katie: And I think you're such a voice of reason when it comes to that because I think...I wanna delve into some of the problems with the way some people do keto in a minute. But I also wanna make sure we differentiate because there's a lot of medical professionals out there saying keto is super dangerous and you can really harm your body and no one should ever be in ketosis. But they're typically lumping that in with ketoacidosis which is a completely different thing. And I think there's a lot of misunderstanding there, so we have on the one hand these doctors saying, you know, keto is super dangerous. You should never be low carb. What would be your answer to that, and especially like tying in how ketoacidosis is such a different thing?

Mark: Well, the first...to the issue with physicians just not understanding, I mean, that's a big problem that I have with the medical profession today is that physicians don't understand nutrition and they don't spend enough time looking into metabolism. They don't spend enough time looking into the dietary etiology of most diseases. I mean, most of the reasons people go to the hospital these days have to do with their diet and choices that they made. So, you know, for a physician to say just point blank, "Well, that's dangerous and I wouldn't do that," you know, that's an irresponsible statement from a physician.

Now, with regard to ketoacidosis, ketoacidosis can happen in Type 1 diabetics and in certain, you know, severe lifelong alcoholics for instance. These are situations where the ketones build up in the blood. But after a certain level in the average normal, non-Type 1 diabetic, ketones have this effect of, at a certain level, raising insulin. And insulin shuts off the production of more ketones. So it's kind of a self-regulating system that you can't really get above five or six millimolar in the bloodstream without invoking this insulin shut-off mechanism. And that's for people who can produce insulin. Now a Type 1 diabetic who cannot produce insulin and who doesn't have access to injected insulin might encounter a situation where the amount of ketones increases in the blood at the same time that glucose is increasing in the blood. And there is an acidic effect in the blood that could be quite dangerous, that can be deadly.

But for most people that's not an issue because we make enough insulin and it doesn't take much insulin to shut-off or regulate that production of ketones. Meanwhile, if you go back and look at how the body is wired, we are literally born with a factory setting that expects us to get most of our energy from fat and to be producing ketones at some level all the time. Even if we're used to burning sugar and we're carbohydrate dependent, many of us wake up in the morning and before breakfast we'll show some ketones in the bloodstream because that's...we've literally fasted overnight. We've sort of run low on glucose, and in the absence of glucose the body's first sort of inclination is to say, "Okay, we'll make some ketones," because in

the absence of glucose we have this amazing super fuel that we know how to make and we'll make it. Of course, the typical person who has been making ketones when they wake up in the morning, then has a breakfast of whole grain waffles or whole grain cereal or pancakes or toast and juice or whatever, immediately starts to go back into that blood-glucose-carbohydrate dependent mode and with the rise of insulin that comes from that eating, shuts off ketosis and you get out of that whole thing.

But we're always, always, always, all of us are making ketones at some level all the time. It's just that when we decide to restrict carbohydrates sufficiently that we're going to go deep into this keto state where we're going to be. And by the way, the reason we do it, and the reason I even call it the Keto Reset Diet, I'm not even suggesting that people like become keto and spend the rest of their lives in ketosis. That's not even interesting to me. I'm saying let's spend six weeks in keto. Let's reset the metabolism. Let's ramp up the number of mitochondria which is where the fat burns in a cell. Let's build the metabolic machinery in the brain to use ketones. Let's build the metabolic flexibility to be able to use all types of fuel so that even when I'm not keto, and I tell people I live in the keto zone right now. Sometimes I'm 50 grams of carbs a day which is pretty much in ketosis. Some days I'm 150 grams of carbs a day which is decidedly not keto. And yet when I'm 150 grams a day I don't feel any different. My energy doesn't shift. I don't get some kind of carb flu. I don't get feeling whacky because I've done the work. I've built the metabolic machinery and I've built the metabolic flexibility to be able to take whatever fuel substrate I'm eating that day and to burn it efficiently.

Katie: Yea, and that's huge. I think that's one of the downfalls of a lot of these kind of eating strategies that people have today is they eliminate an entire food...macro nutrient group but not just the food because I'm perfectly fine with eliminating sugar forever. I don't think there's a biological need, but I think when you eliminate an entire group permanently it can have some changes in your gut bacteria and it can create some problems in the body. And I think that's where you're a voice of reason. You're using it as a tool, not a dogma, and you've figured out how to adapt it. To me, your approach has always seem to be maximizing life enjoyment and health. And so you're not gonna get rid of something that's gonna make you...it's gonna make you miserable for the rest of your life. You're gonna figure out how to work it into a framework of a healthy lifestyle that's also sustainable.

And I wanna touch on what I see as some of the big problems in some people's understanding of keto. And if you see on Instagram there's a lot of people doing what they call keto which literally just looks like they're eating only fat and protein. And most of it's dairy so they're making like a pizza that's got a cheese crust with cheese on top, with meat on top of that but they're not eating vegetables. And so I'd love to hear your kind of...what you say to these people that are doing keto differently and that have made it kind of a dogma instead of a strategy. So how do you answer those people?

Mark: Well, first of all, I don't answer those people other than to say, "Jeez, that's your choice. That's awfully limiting," because as you've just acknowledged, Katie, I wanna be as inclusive as possible so I wanna find the food that'd give me the greatest amount of enjoyment, that'd give me the greatest amount of variety. What you described is sort of the old school Atkins Keto which is meat and cheese, and dairy and cream, and butter, and fat, and fat and fat, and a little bit of protein and zero carbs and certainly zero vegetables, and absolutely zero fruit. And I'm of the feeling that, you know, I think you can have your salad and eat it too. In my case, I make a big salad everyday which is the cornerstone of my diet. And yet as I describe it to you, it's a giant bowl of mixed greens, some bell peppers, some cucumbers, some celery, some crunchy stuff, maybe some nuts in there, certainly 25 grams of protein from either tuna or salmon, or chicken, or some kind of...or egg, some kind of protein on top of it, and then I douse it with some primal kitchen salad dressings which are made with

healthy fats.

So I've made this giant vegetable salad that has meat on it, it has some protein, that's got healthy fats in the form of avocado oil and when you break it down there are not more than 17 grams of carbs in that entire salad. And those carbs are locked in a fiber's matrix because of the nature of the vegetables that I've chosen. So I'm having a salad that has maybe 450 calories, that's got 20, 25 grams of protein, that's got 25, 30 grams of fat, and that has, again, 15 to 17 grams of carbs. It is a perfectly keto meal.

And by the way, if you took the meat off of it, it would be a perfectly keto vegan meal or vegetarian meal as well. Now, it's important that I have these vegetables because, yes, to address your question about the microbiome, you know, what am I gonna feed the healthy little critters in my gut who are looking for a fibrous substrate to thrive on? And that's where the vegetables come in. You have to include vegetables if you're going keto. Plus effect is they taste good. I love the crunch. I love the mouth feel of vegetables of a salad every day and a lot of the micronutrients, the micronutrition, the phytonutrients, those little vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals, the anthocyanins and the proanthocyanins, all the little wonderful little micronutrients that you can't get in a cheese burger with no bun or you can't get in a steak with Bearnaise sauce on it. That's what I'm looking for when I'm including vegetables in my keto eating strategy.

So that salad becomes a cornerstone. Now by the time dinner rolls around I'll have a piece of steak or a piece of chicken or, again, some form of protein with dinner. But I might have three of what you would call a normal serving of broccoli. Now, again, you look at the chart and you look at broccoli and you say, "Well, wait a minute. Broccoli, that's three cups of broccoli, whatever it is. That's a lot of broccoli." Well, it is. It's a lot of fiber and it's probably 12 grams of carbs in that entire serving of broccoli which by the way I'll put butter on it or I'll put some form of a dressing on it as well. So I'm getting my healthy fats. I'm getting my protein from whatever the clean source of protein is and I'm getting micronutrients and fiber from the vegetables. And yet at the end of the day when I add it all up, it's less than 50 grams of carbs.

So it's possible that some people, and this I've said to other people, there are a lot of ways to do keto wrong. And there are a couple of ways...there are a lot of ways to do keto right, too. You gotta sort of dial it in for yourself. But I would absolutely not shun vegetables because, oh, my god, vegetables are a source of carbs. It depends on the vegetable. It depends on...hey, it depends on the fruit. Some days I'll finish my day with a, you know, half a cup of blueberries from Maine and it's gonna be, you know, six or eight grams of carbs. It's really about getting rid of the breads, the pies, the pastas, the cereals, the cakes, the candies, the cookies, the sweetened beverages, and all that sugary stuff that people have become so accustomed to.

And even the so called healthy sugary stuff, you know, the paleo treats that have 52 grams of carbs, mostly sugar but it's date sugar, whatever. It's like, no, that's not a free pass. That's...you have to get rid of that stuff, right. But if you do get rid of that stuff then the options that include vegetables are pretty elaborate and pretty enticing.

Katie: I absolutely agree and I think that's where you are such the voice of reason. When you first started blogging because you had this whole movement of, you know, all...like a calorie is a calorie and people just trying to fit in these macros and eat like low fat, low calorie. And you really brought to light that idea that all calories are not created equal. Like certainly straight up sugar is low fat. It's gluten free, you know. There's a lot of...it can fit in a lot of those molds. And that doesn't make it good for you and I think that's such an important point and especially for anyone listening who's raising children right now is understanding that it's

not just getting calories in them. It's getting the nutrients into them.

And I'm leery of any health professional that tells people not to eat a lot of vegetables, and not to eat green vegetables, unless there's a, you know, really serious medical reason at some point because I think that's a huge key and a lot of people miss that when they go keto. And I like also that you talk about lunch being such a huge salad. That's something I've adopted as well from you. But that seems to be in a lot of cultures as well that lunch is the bigger meal, isn't it? Have you noticed that in other cultures? I know you've travelled some.

Mark: Yeah, I mean, it depends on where you go. Sure, in some European countries lunch is so big that they have to take a nap, you know. There's official nap time after lunch. It depends. I mean, this whole notion of three square meals a day which is a fairly American adoption of an industrialized society back in the 1700s where we had people who were, you know, having to go to work early in the morning and then have enough energy to do physical labor all day long. So they had to take some sort of a meal break in the middle of the day and have dinner in the evening. I mean, that sort of became the framework, the guideline, the template for the three-square meals a day. But most of the people that I know in keto, and even those...like I was low carb for 15 years before I went to the next level which is what I call keto. I think keto is just next level primal.

I was low carb. I had all the energy I felt I needed. You know, I maintained muscle mass. I didn't get sick, didn't get hungry. So I thought I had everything dialed in. My willingness to go keto for two months was mostly as an experiment. And at the end of that experiment I thought, "Wow, there's another level of consciousness available to me for having just cut 40 extra grams of carb out of my life every day." It was pretty profound and that's where I saw that this could be available to, you know, a lot of different people.

But one of the through lines we see in the keto world and the low carb world is this idea of a compressed eating window. So my typical day is I get up in the morning. I have a cup of coffee. I don't have bullet proof coffee. I don't put a lot of calories in my coffee. I have a cup of coffee with a little bit of heavy cream in it, a pinch of sugar. And then that's all I have until one o'clock in the afternoon. That's...I wake up. I'm full of energy. I'm ready to roll. I'm ready to go to work. I get up, you know, at 6:30. I read two papers. I do some puzzles. I go to work. I might take a break at 10 o'clock in the morning and go to the gym and do a hard workout, come back from the gym, still don't eat, go back to work. I do a couple of podcasts, write a blogpost. Around one o'clock is my first meal of the day, and that's that big ass salad. And even by one o'clock it's like I'm not ravenous. I'm just ready to eat.

And one of the skills that we teach and taught from the beginning in the "Primal Blueprint" is if you're not hungry then why eat? Because there's always gonna be food around. It's not like we're roaming the plains or the savannas of Africa, you know, scavenging for food. There's always gonna be food around in this country. So if you're not hungry then don't force yourself to eat. Develop this ability to understand when you're hungry and when you are hungry and it's time to eat, go ahead and eat. And then while you're eating, ask yourself, "Am I really hungry for the next bite?" In other words, not, "Am I full or is my plate finished?" but, "Am I really hungry for the next bite? Am I willing to push the plate away and say, 'You know what? That's enough. I'm good?'" And these are the sorts of skills that get further refined when you go keto because your body has now become so good at burning fat and so good at making ketones and so no longer dependent on glucose every couple of hours to raise blood sugar and fuel the brain that this skill then stays with you whether or not you remain in ketosis as long as you don't go crazy with the carbs. You know, as long as you don't go over 150, 175 grams a day.

But the...just back to the compressed eating window, so I eat lunch at one. I might have a handful of nuts in the afternoon sometimes. And that's typically just if I'm home and I'm thinking about it. Otherwise, if I'm on the road I don't even think about a snack. And then I have dinner at seven and I have, you know, again, a nice form of protein. It might be salmon. It may be chicken, or turkey, or steak, or lamb, whatever, and some copious amount of a colorful vegetable with either olive oil or avocado oil as a grilling agent or with butter on it, or whatever. And if I finish the night off with a square or two of dark chocolate, I've had a great day.

By the way, there are even now...there are paleo wines available. They're low sugar, no sugar wines that are low in alcohol that you can have with dinner and not negatively impact whether or not you produce ketones. So do I feel like I'm, you know, making major sacrifices in my life by the way I eat? On the contrary, I enjoy every single bite of food I eat. Purposely, I also don't eat anything that I don't enjoy. So even if somebody says, "Well, here's a really healthy snack I made for you with, you know, kale and chickpeas, and..." you know, it's like, "No." You know, if I'm not into it I'm not gonna...I don't care how healthy it is. If it doesn't taste great I'm not gonna eat it, you know. I'm here to enjoy food and I wanna enjoy and savor every bite that I eat. And I think that's an important distinction because a lot of people would look at what you and I have done over the last decade and go, "Well, jeez, Katie and Mark, they're, you know, they're really preaching the good stuff here, but it's pretty restrictive and it's like you have to be really...you have to sacrifice." And I'm like, "No." I don't feel like I'm sacrificing at all. I feel like I include some pretty awesome meals in my eating strategy that you might if you were just a standard American dieter think, "Oh my god, I could never eat that. It's too much fat. It's too decadent. I couldn't eat that." So that's my take on that.

Katie: Well, it obviously shows, I mean, how well it works because having met you you are probably in better shape than vast majority of people half your age. And I love what you said about your food and you won't eat it unless you enjoy it because I kind of teach this with my kids that food is first and foremost for nourishment. So it shouldn't even be considered as a food option if it's not gonna nourish your body. But from there, there's so many ways to make healthy food amazingly delicious. So, you're really not ever deprived if you're willing to put in the effort to do that. And I think you're such a testament to that. And, definitely, not to like keep hammering this point home too much but when it comes to the vegetables, I'll say it like as a woman I've noticed that there's a direct correlation I feel the best when I'm eating the most green vegetables which if you look at the science those bind extra estrogen in the body and they have a whole lot of phytonutrients and there's very biochemical reasons. So it's not a deprivation at all. And it's completely contrary. It's feeling amazing because you're fueling your body a lot more efficiently.

So you mentioned you're eating in a restrictive window which brings up another point I wanted to talk about which is, is keto different in any way for women, and is intermittent fasting different for women? Because intermittent fasting seems to go hand in hand with keto quite a bit. But I also think that there can be some concerns there when women do it too intensely for too long. But I'd love to hear your take.

Mark: Sure. So first of all, we are all...you know, even though we all burn fat the same way, we all build muscle the same way, we all create, you know...we all build our immune system the same way, it's the degree to which we do that that differs among individuals. And that has to do with alleles and genetic contributions from your parents. So some people might be a little bit more predisposed to storing fat than others. It might just be more difficult to burn it off. But the mechanism by which this happens is the same in everybody. So we're sort of bio individual is the term that Joshua Rosenthal uses at the IIN. We have this bio-individuality that we need to pay attention to. And then we talked about the experiment of one, N equals one in the ancestral nutrition side of things, paleo primal, that there can be a template that we can use to sort of identify

a new strategy but we still have to pay attention to who we are and pay attention to how unique our response is to that change in food information.

So when we talk about men versus women, yes, I mean, you can make a blanket kind of statement that says men are probably better at going at full keto than women on balance in general. You know, women have different hormone systems at different times of the month, at different times of their lives. We also have to look at the history of individuals and how much metabolic damage...I hate to use that term in some regards but it does describe generically what people have done with choices over time. So how much metabolic damage has someone done by eating trans fats and lots of sugar and burning the candle at both ends and not getting enough sleep and, you know, all these other lifestyle factors that may play a role the day you decide to go keto.

Some people, and we have in the Keto Reset book, it's a 21-day stair step program to have you become better at burning fat. Now with some people, it's gonna take more than 21 days. And how we address that in the book is that at the end of 21 days we have a midterm exam, and you have to get a 75 or more in that midterm in order to earn the right to go full keto and at least in our terms, on our terms. And those...by the way, the exam has more to do with how you feel rather than blood ketones or urine ketones. You know, do you wake up in the morning and do you have enough energy to go X amount of hours without eating? Can you do a workout without eating and without eating after the workout? How was your sleep? How are your stress levels? Things like that that can play a critical role in how effective going keto might be for you.

So much of this is more individual across the spectrum of men and women, and yet we do find some women, you know, who...and, by the way, a lot of women who responded and said, "I was in a plateau for the last five or six years. I went keto. It changed everything. This is unbelievable. It's incredible. I'm gonna stay this way for the rest of my life." lots of great testimonials there. And then I've had other people say, "You know, I tried it, didn't work for me. I felt miserable. I had the keto flu," which is just this space that you wind up in where you've deprived your brain of glucose but you're not yet good. You haven't really built the metabolic machinery yet to burn ketones. So you're in kind of a no man's land of not having enough glucose to fill the brain with blood sugar but not having built enough enzyme systems to effectively use ketones.

And that can take time for some people. That can take a couple of weeks and it's...for some people, if you haven't stair stepped your way into this can be kind of miserable. So why would people wanna feel that way for a longer period of time if...simply by eating a bagel at two o'clock in the afternoon, they can kick themselves out it, right? And so a lot of people kind of bail just as they're getting close to experiencing the benefits of keto and just as this this whole metabolic machinery thing starts to kick in.

So it takes a little bit more time for some people and, again, that can be hormonal, that can be based on a lifetime of not so great choices. Some people have as a result of stress or not so great choices might have some thyroid issues. And so sometimes a thyroid problem can kind of become problematic when you're going keto. Not in a life-threatening situation, just as like in an energy situation. Again, it's...but, you know, the author of "The Paleo Thyroid Solution," Elle Russ who has been a lifetime thyroid patient and finally dealt with it herself after having addressed it with 15 doctors over her span of trying to investigate her issues and finally healed herself going primal, and then certainly...and then going keto and found out that while she had been dependent on T3, she thought it was gonna be for the rest of her life. Just a two-month experiment where she was off T3 entirely for two months and it was fine. She went back on because she's still in that experimental stage but it's interesting, you know, how there was a person who had low thyroid, who had thyroid issues,

who you would have thought, "Well, that's gonna be a tough one for her to go keto." And then she got great results going keto.

So I hate to be painting this in more generic terms but, you know, it works for most people. For some people for whom it doesn't work I would wanna get in and kind of be a little bit more investigative in terms of your compliance and are you really, you know, doing all of the necessary steps to do that. I mean, in the book we talk a lot about sleep. You can have dialed in the diet perfectly but if your sleep is terrible and you're creating stress hormones as a result of lack of sleep and stress hormones tend to, you know, turn off ketosis, increase gluconeogenesis and increase fat storing, they're totally counterproductive, these stress hormones, to the goal of becoming good at burning fat. And the fact that even though you're eating right but you haven't addressed a serious sleep issue is gonna be problematic. But there's a solution there if you address the sleep or if you address the stress.

So, you know, we're complex biological organisms and anytime we look at our own experiment, it is a...there are a lot of different variables in this equation. And we have to look at all the variables in order to get the outcome that we're seeking. I hope that makes sense to you, Katie. I didn't mean to be so obtuse. But that's kind of what we're talking here. It's just this can be quite complex for some people.

Katie: Yea, I think that bio-individuality is so key. But I like the points that you made about sleep and you talked about this with supplements on your blog as well. I know that's something that I've read a lot from your writings is that unless you have those dialed in, unless you have your diet dialed in and your sleep dialed in, you're not gonna...like no supplement in the world is gonna fix things. No like bio-hack in the world is gonna fix it if you're not...if you don't have those components dialed in. And you really have some great resources. I'll make sure we're linked to those on optimizing your sleep because, like you said, you can't, you know, out supplement a bad sleep or a bad diet.

If those keys aren't there, it's not gonna do you any good. And I think that you have a balanced approach there as well.

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Katie: So you talked about your short eating window, and what I've seen at least being a thyroid patient myself, is that like sustained long term fasting tends to be a stressor on my body. But short term, intermittent fasting, like similar to what you do with a slightly longer window, seems to work really well which people kind of get scared of that term, intermittent fasting. But we do it at night when we sleep anyway, like you said. So I just try to do like kind of a smaller eating window but usually in seven to eight hours. So like a little bit longer than you but I think that could be a good approach even for women, if it works. I think you have to, like you said, do trial and error and figure out what's gonna work for you though for sure.

Mark: Agreed 100%, and I think, you know, one of the mantras that the popular culture has put across in the last several decades, you know, breakfast is the most important meal of the day. And it's like, well, if your definition of breakfast is a meal that you eat at eight o'clock, then I'm not so certain that that's an accurate statement. If you're...whatever meal you use to break a fast which in my case is a one o'clock salad, okay, that becomes the most important meal of the day. But this notion that as soon as you wake up you need to eat something to get going and get fueling, all that does is kind of promote this ongoing dependency on carbohydrate, on sugars, on glucose, and it unburdens the body of having to make any changes that would make you good at burning fat.

We're a very efficient systems and part of that of efficiency is laziness. So the body doesn't wanna do any more work than it has to do to survive. And so if we're feeding it on a regular basis, we get up at eight and we have something to eat, we have a mid-morning snack at 10:30, and then we have a lunch at 12:30, and then we have a mid-afternoon snack, and a coffee break, and then we have dinner, and then we have something to eat while we're watching TV, you know, the body never gets a chance to do all the cool stuff that it does when we're not eating. Most of the cool stuff, most of the repair, and the fat burning, you know, the autophagy, that tendency that cells have to look inward and do some house cleaning and get rid of damaged proteins and damaged fats, that stuff doesn't happen when we're eating every couple of hours. That good stuff only happens when we're not eating. That's when all the housekeeping, all the house cleaning, all the DNA repair takes place during those moments or those hours when we're not eating. And that's, I think, difficult for people to kind of comprehend because most people think, "I have to eat. I have to fuel myself on a regular basis. Otherwise, I'll cannibalize muscle tissue. Otherwise, I'll run out of energy. Otherwise, I'll have low blood sugar and I won't be performing well."

And all that actually comes true if you've lived in this carbohydrate-dependent paradigm because if you're so carb-dependent that you skip a meal, it's true, the brain will go, "Whoa, where's our carbs? We have to start taking evasive action. Let's cause the stress hormones to be secreted, to tear down muscle, to make some glucose from those amino acids to send it through the brain." So when you're in that carbohydrate paradigm, you are kind of locked into that eating every couple of hours. But as soon as you free yourself from that, as soon as you start restricting carbs methodically and with a plan, and you prompt your body to want...to have to make new machinery, now your body's going, "Well, I'd rather be lazy and just eat every couple of hours." But because I'm not eating every couple of hours, I need to take action and build a metabolic machinery to take fat and use that as fuel, lord knows I have enough stored body fat. So I can use that fuel and I can exist for not just hours but days at a time without eating, without eating anything if need be. And I'm not suggesting that people do that, but that's what the body is prepared to do when you build that metabolic machinery. So the body says, "Okay, we're gonna start up regulating enzyme systems. We're gonna start making more mitochondria so we can burn more fat."

And all of these systems then get incorporated because you've sent a new signal to the body that says, "No, we're not gonna be supplying glucose every couple of hours. And we're not even gonna be supplying calories every couple of hours. So we're gonna have this compressed eating window which is in your case I'm gonna suspect from 7:00 PM until 11:00 or noon. And then all the good stuff is gonna happen between 7:00 PM and noon when the body says, "Okay, we can start burning fat now because there's not gonna be a ready source of calories coming off a plate. So let's just take it off the thighs. We don't know the difference. We don't care. You know, fat is fuel. Fuel is great. Let's burn it."

So that's the nature of this decision, this conscious decision, to cut back on carbs and force the body to go back to its factory setting which is to become really good at burning fats.

Katie: And there's tremendous freedom in that. Not being stuck on an eating schedule where you feel like you have to always be near a kitchen, or always have like a granola bar in your purse in case your blood sugar gets low. There's a huge freedom in moving past that. And I'm with you on the breakfast thing because that's other advice I hear a lot from dieticians is that you should never ever skip breakfast. And what they mean is a morning meal and they think it should be like rich in whole grains. But if you look at what we actually eat in the U.S. for breakfast it's not breakfast, it's dessert. Like a lot of breakfasts have more sugar than dessert.

Mark: Yea. Exactly. It's just ironic and crazy that the dieticians, the one we would think would have the cutting-edge information, are working off of a 30-year-old paradigm.

Katie: Definitely ironic. It's one of my big lofty goals one day. I'd love to see with all these increasing awareness and all these moms that now know so much for us to kind of make breakfast cereal irrelevant just like stop buying it. So that...it's no longer needed because that's in my mind the worst thing we can feed our kids in the morning is sugary cereal. I know you echo that as well. So a couple other things I wanted to delve a little deeper into that you mentioned. You mentioned that you work out before you eat your first meal. So you train fasted and that's another thing that goes against some of the conventional wisdom that a lot of people may have heard because that's advice that's commonly given is that you should eat carbs before you work out to fuel your workout. So I'd love to have you explain why you feel it's a good idea to train fasted. And I think it is. And also you mentioned that you very rarely snack, that you might eat a few nuts but that's it. So can you explain like why it's good just like not eating at night to give your body a break in between meals as well?

Mark: Well, so the latter question first. So whenever you snack, you ramp up all this digestive mechanism. It kind of turns off all the cool stuff that's happening, all the repairs, and all the rebuilding, and all the regeneration that's going on because now you've incorporated a digestive process that requires insulin, ghrelin, leptin, glucagon, probably some cortisol. And so all these amazing restorative processes get turned off as you try to...as your body says, "Okay, more fuel coming in. Let's get ready to store some fuel." So that's why I try not to snack even though... I work out of my house and I'm surrounded by samples of stuff that people send me all the time. It's pretty phenomenal, pretty cool.

Now the pre-workout meal or even the post-workout meal, because people would say, "Well, you gotta have carbs to do the workout," well, that's what glycogen is for. My muscles have been...just because I'm low carb doesn't mean my muscles don't restore glycogen. I have glycogen in my muscles so I can do a hard workout. The only caveat might be, well, I couldn't do that same hard work out every day because it would take me longer than 24 hours to repair, to refuel the glycogen in my muscles. But I'm also the guy that says, "Why

would you wanna work out hard every single day?" Like that's also counterproductive. It's completely antithetical to getting stronger and faster and leaner. All it does working out that hard every day is tear you down. So you should probably only do two hard workouts a week. And then the other workouts can be different or fillers or easy or play. In which case, you're mostly burning fat anyway, and in that case, you don't even need the glycogen reserves that you thought you were gonna have to replenish directly after the workout.

So the old school of training was, and I was one of those people, I was a marathon runner. So I ran 100 miles a week. I ran 12 to 20 miles every single day unless I was shut down by an injury. And so I'd finish a workout and I'd have to think immediately about, "I gotta do this again tomorrow. So I gotta replenish all the glycogen. I gotta eat a lot of carbs. I could eat 500, 600, 700 grams of carbs every single day to get ready to do it again." And now I know that was just devastating on my body. That amount of training, that amount of highly inflammatory carbohydrate foods was not serving me in any way, shape or form. So I switched my philosophy around to, "Okay, if I'm training to become better at what I'm doing, then part of that strategy is to rest, and recover, and build back, and repair from that damage. So I don't wanna go out and do it hard every day. I wanna do it a couple of times a week, and then I wanna become..." Then I could do...I mean, I could do the hard stuff a couple of times a week, but I can do the slow easy stuff in between every day because the better I'm burning up fat then the longer I can do these easy workouts. They become...they don't become devastating on the body. They just become restorative, you know, as a sort of counterpoint to this destructive, hard training every day. You have easy days where the workouts are actually fun and then hard days where they're pretty damn hard. But they're not every day. They're just two days a week.

This was the mindset of the body building community and the endurance committee for years and years and years was multiple small meals a day, don't ever run out of carbohydrate because you'll cannibalize muscle tissue. You worked too hard to build that muscle tissue. And that was kind of what drove most people's training regimen. Now that we know that you can become really good at burning fat, now that we know most endurance athletes can derive 90% of their energy at a very high level of output from stored body fat and they can spare that glycogen, it changed the whole training paradigm and makes it not only, you know, more comfortable to train, it's less devastating. But you can actually become a better athlete at it.

Part of that old paradigm also, because you had to restore glycogen at the end of every workout. So there was an industry that was built around four to one ratio of carbs to protein that you would slam down at the end of every workout in order to prepare for the next workout. Now if you're gonna workout hard every day, which I think is crazy, but if you're gonna choose to do that, then that's the strategy. And that's...I'm not gonna say it's a bad strategy. It's a strategy to workout hard every day. But if your goal is to build and to become stronger because of the workout, then, A, you're not gonna train hard every day. You're gonna give yourself a day or two rest in between. And, B, and this is probably the most important thing, when you work out hard, the body recognizes that hard work and puts out a pulse of growth hormone and testosterone.

And if you don't eat after the workout, that growth hormone and that testosterone go...it does it's work to repair the muscle tissue and do what it needs to do. If you do eat after that workout, the insulin that you derive, that your pancreas puts out as a result of that high carbohydrate meal, blunts the testosterone and growth hormone effect. So you can either choose to replenish glycogen and do it hard every day and literally like Sisyphus rolling a stone up a hill, never get much better, but feel like you're hammering yourself. So maybe you feel good about the fact that you beat yourself up every day. Or you could decide to just improve from one workout to the next and maximize the growth hormone and testosterone and not care about

replenishing glycogen because you know you're not gonna do it hard every day. You're gonna do it hard every two, every three, or four days.

Katie: I think that's great advice and I would guess a majority of people listening like me are moms who are trying to figure out how to fit in a work out in the most efficient way possible and not to kill ourselves every day in the gym. So I think that's really valid advice to spread those harder workouts out and then to do more enjoyable things like walking, and swimming, and that kind of stuff in between which is, again, such a balanced approach. But I wanna make sure we circle back to the book. Obviously, the links will be in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm but can you kind of takes us through the broad overview of the Keto Reset Diet and what it looks like, how long it lasts, just kind of give us the high level?

Mark: Sure. So basically, obviously, because I'm an educator I like to explain why we're doing this in the first place. And I've maybe touched upon some of that in this interview today. But we wanna build a metabolic machinery to become really good at burning fat. In order to do that we have to create some new information that the body takes and uses at a genetic level to build more of this metabolic machinery. And so the first thing we do is we actually take you...we make you primal. So, we get rid of the offensive ingredients. We get...clearly, we have to get rid of the sugars, the sugary drinks, the pies, the cakes, the candies, the cookies, the breads, the crackers, the cereals, the bagels, the...like it goes on and on. And if you were to list out all of these sources of processed grains and sugars that convert to glucose pretty quickly in the bloodstream it would make your head spin. But that's what we have to do. We have to get rid of those. We get rid of the industrial seed oil. So we get rid of canola, soy bean oil, corn oil, all the trans fats. In their place, we put avocado oil, extra virgin olive oil, coconut oil, butter, ghee, lard, wonderful sources of fats like that.

Initially, we get rid of grains and legumes. We can maybe add those back later on. We'll talk about that. But in the initial stages we wanna stair step you into basically a low carb arena first where you maybe add 90 to 100 grams of carbs a day. And it's a very comfortable place to be because if you've gotten rid of all of that crap, you're still left, as we identified earlier, with some amazing food choices, lots of vegetables, some fruit, maybe even a starchy tuber here or there. Then we take our midterm exam and we sort of see how we feel. Obviously, we talk about sleep. We talk about sun exposure. We talk about play. We talk about exercise. And so we have to really figure out how we're gonna exercise during this period of carbohydrate restriction because we want exercise to be supportive and not drag us down because we're trying to work too hard at it.

And then the second half of the book is about going keto. And it's about finding 30 or 40 more grams of carbs in your daily routine that you can cut out. And having fun and doing it with grace and ease and getting to that point where you wake up in the morning and you go, "Wow, I just...there's a different level of energy I have and it's crazy because I don't feel like eating and I feel like going straight to work, or I feel like going straight to the gym." And so we spend six weeks in keto. That's the recommended time in the Keto Reset Diet. And six weeks is enough to get 95% of the benefits you're gonna get. You could stay in keto. I know people who've been in keto for 10 years and love it and would not leave. But I'm not even one of those people. I'm gonna use the Keto Reset once a year for me to reset my machinery, to reset my metabolism. And that doesn't mean I'm gonna go whole hog off the rails and do 250 to 350 grams of carbs a day. It just means that I can have 100, 110, 150 grams of carbs a day some days. In other days I'll look back on the day and go, "Wow, I only hit 30 grams of carbs today. So today was a keto day."

But because I don't notice the difference, Katie, because I don't feel like, "You know, I had 110 grams of carbs. I kicked myself out of keto. I feel like crap," life shouldn't be that way. Humans are not...we would not have

been designed to feel like crap if we went from a week of keto to finding a big treasure trove of fruit. So some people who are in this industry and who say, "Geez, well, when I have more than 70 grams of carbs, I'm kicked out of keto for a week and I feel like crap," dude, you haven't built the metabolic machinery yet. You haven't built the metabolic flexibility to be able to eat healthy foods. Don't get me wrong. You can't eat, you know, three Cinnabons and expect this to happen. But, conservatively healthy food, which means lots of vegetables, some fruit, the occasional piece of bread with butter on it, you know, that's what we're after.

We're after this rationing up of our efficiency and flexibility so that we trend toward our ideal body composition. And this is something that I would...like, my wish would be that people would do this at least once a year the same way they might look at doing a cleanse once a year, right, that they're just gonna do something great for their body once a year, that up ratchets everything in terms of their efficiency, their energy level, their immune system, their productivity at work, and so on.

Katie: I think that's a great idea and to have it be a reset, like it's meant to be a reset of your system rather than necessarily like you're never gonna eat any carbs again. I think the balance again is key. And I also wanna make sure we talk about, before we end, about "Primal Kitchen" because I think it's the most fitting thing in the world that you came out with products that help people eat more vegetables and love them. I know "Primal Kitchen" is a staple in my own kitchen now. But talk about "Primal Kitchen" and kind of what inspired that.

Mark: Well, so I've been writing about food for 10 years, and I had a weekly recipe. I published a bunch of cookbooks. I even published a book years ago called "Healthy Sauces, Dressings and Toppings" because I recognized that once you cleaned up your diet, once you get rid of the sugars and the cakes, and the breads, and the pastas and you get rid of the industrial seed oils, you know, you're left with some awesome food, maybe five kinds of meat that you're gonna eat next year, you know, beef, lamb, pork, chicken, turkey, a couple of kinds of fish, you know, maybe 17, 18 vegetables. But the difference is how you prepare them. That's where the real variety comes in.

So...and I recognized that even though I like to cook, there aren't that many great commercial sauces and dressings, and toppings, and things that you can put on food that would allow you to use them almost indiscriminately and say, "I'm not gonna use this sparingly because the more I put on my salad of this particular salad dressing the healthier that meal becomes. Or the more mayonnaise I put on this burger, or the more mayonnaise, or the more chipotle lime mayo I put on this piece of fish, literally the healthier it becomes because I've got now healthy fats from avocado oil going on there." So I identified a niche in the marketplace that I thought was like crazy that no one had filled it because it was all about making great tasting healthy sauces, dressings, and toppings. And we've really...I mean, we've found a tremendous amount of traction. You know, we've been the number one bestselling mayonnaise on Amazon for every day for the last year and a half. We're the number one bestselling condiment in all of Whole Foods. Of all the condiments, we're the best-selling condiment with our mayo. Our salad dressings are taking off. We're in 7,000 stores. You can get us on Amazon. You can get us on thrivemarket.com which I know you love. We've been fans of Thrive for a long time. And you can get it in a lot of the top stores right now.

The idea was, I mean, look, I make these products for me because it's like I wish a product like that existed. And I wasn't the biggest fan of mayonnaise for a long time, but the fact that I like tuna fish salad, I like chicken salad, I like potato salad because cold potatoes are a good form of resistance starch, I like egg salad, but there were no good mayonnaise that I could make these with. So that was sort of the first product we came out with

was this healthy mayo that's made with avocado oil and organic eggs from cage free hens, organic vinegar from non-GMO beets, a little bit of sea salt. And it's been a game changer for a lot of people. It's really opened a lot of palates to the possibilities.

Imagine taking one bowl of lettuce and mixed greens but now we have six different salad dressings. And so every day I can make that salad taste different with the flavor of dressing. It's pretty cool.

Katie: Yea, and they're so good, even just... I had for lunch today, I had sardines, and that's one of those foods that I tell people like it's so healthy. Like, learn to love it. But also it's a stronger tasting food, so my tip is always just chop up an organic pickle and mix it in with your mayo. You have tartar sauce and put that on top of it which helps tone down the flavor if you're getting used to it. And it's delicious and I think the mayo especially has been a game changer for a lot of people because, like you said, until you guys there was not really a great option that wasn't canola oil, or vegetable oil, or soy bean oil, or something like that. So now there actually is and it's convenient. And I know pretty much anybody I know in the health space, I can find their mayo in any of their kitchens at any time. Well, Mark, I wanna make sure that I respect your time and the time of everyone listening but I wanna thank you so much for being here. I could talk to you forever and I'll make sure to include links to everything we talked about especially to your book in the show notes because it's really well written and I think it will help a tremendous amount of people. But thank you for your time and for being here.

Mark: Well, I appreciate it and thanks for having me, Katie. Always a pleasure.

Katie: And thanks so much to all of you for listening. And I will see you next time on the Healthy Moms Podcast.

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