



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on June 12, 2019

Pentagon Officials Say Keto Diet May Benefit Military Divers

Pentagon officials are studying research indicating that people whose bodies are in ketosis — an effect of the popular ketogenic (or “keto”) diet — can stay underwater for longer periods, making the diet potentially beneficial to military divers.

A report in the *Washington Times* on June 10 quoted Lisa Sanders, director of science and technology at U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) in Tampa, Florida. (A note on its website states that USSOCOM “develops and fields technology to some of the most demanding customers in the world including Green Berets, Navy SEALs, Marine Raiders, and Air Force Special Tactics Units.”)



“One of the effects of truly being in ketosis is that it changes the way your body handles oxygen deprivation, so you can actually stay underwater at [deeper] depths for longer periods of time and not go into oxygen seizures,” Sanders said at a high-level defense industry conference in Tampa late last month. “That kind of technology is available today,” she continued. “We can tell whether you are or are not in ketosis. We have really good indications of how to put you in ketosis. And we know statistically what that does to your ability to sustain oxygen.

“The problem,” she said, “is I don’t have the authority to tell people — swimmers, submariners, etc. — that they’re going to get themselves in ketosis so they can stay in the water longer. That’s an authority question, not a technology question.”

Given the competitive nature of most individuals, especially members of elite military units such as Green Berets and Navy SEALs, it is likely that if the military can make a convincing case that the keto diet will enhance the performance of divers, simple persuasion, rather than orders, will be enough to gain their compliance.

The keto diet, like some other low-carbohydrate diets such as the Atkins diet, is a low carbohydrate diet. In the absence of carbohydrates for an extended period of time, the liver converts stored fat into ketones. An elevated level of ketone bodies in the blood leads to a state known as nutritional ketosis, which is the goal of such diets.

The ketogenic diet was founded back in 1924 by Dr. Russell Wilder at the Mayo Clinic. However, it did not receive widespread attention until around 2013-2016.

The Atkins diet became popular starting in 1972, with the publication of *Dr. Atkins’ Diet Revolution: The High Calorie Way to Stay Thin Forever*. Atkins founded Atkins Nutritionals in 1989 to promote the sale of Atkins-branded products. After a period of receiving little attention, the Atkins diet regained



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widespread popularity in 2003 and 2004.

The popularity of low-carb diets such as the keto and Atkins diets led to a decline in the sales of carbohydrate-heavy foods and an increase of the number of reduced-carbohydrate foods being introduced to the marketplace.

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