



Matthew's Friends Medical Advisory Board

Response to recent UK government changes to food labelling

Over recent years, the increasing popularity of low carbohydrate diets as a lifestyle choice for wellbeing and weight loss has been a double-edged sword for those following medical Ketogenic Dietary Therapies (KDT).

On the plus side, there has been a massive increase in books, websites, recipes and food products designed for the lifestyle low-carb community that can also be helpful to some following medical KDT. This has certainly expanded the range and accessibility of lower carbohydrate alternatives and eased KDT meal creation for many.

On the minus side, not all these foods are suitable for medical KDT, so caution is needed. When it comes to manufactured foods, it's essential to refer to the back of pack nutrition label for carbohydrate, fat and protein data AND check the ingredients list for suitability too. UK food labelling regulations control the way that both the nutrition label and the ingredients list are declared so these are the most reliable way to check out a product. Eye-catching front-of-pack flashes claiming 'low carb', or 'keto' are provided at the discretion of the food manufacturer and are currently unregulated so provide no guarantee of suitability for medical KDT.

Recently, the UK government implemented a ruling under the Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation (EC) 1924/2006, criminalising the use of the term "low carb," including keto, because these are not legally defined under the current regulations. Understandably the manufacturers of low carbohydrate foods are concerned at this and proposing regulation so that such claims can be consistent and fair.

Matthew's Friends are all for giving families a wide variety of products to enhance the palatability and acceptance of KDT, but we are also very keen to see clear unambiguous labelling of these products. We will watch this space with interest!