

How the Carnivore Diet Undermines Your Thyroid Health

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Cutting out carbohydrates on a carnivore diet limits the glucose your body relies on to convert the inactive thyroid hormone T4 into the active hormone T3, which may leave you tired, cold, and struggling with weight gain
- › Fresh meat contains glycogen that supplies some carbs, but aged meat loses this benefit and, according to bioenergetic researcher Georgi Dinkov, builds up endotoxin, which may disrupt metabolism and promote inflammation
- › Eating only muscle meat supplies an excess of amino acids that may suppress thyroid hormone production and throws off calcium-to-phosphorus balance. This may create long-term stress on your metabolism
- › Excess iron storage is a concern for some long-term carnivore eaters, and high ferritin combined with oxidative stress can damage your mitochondria, further weakening thyroid-driven energy production
- › Steps that may help restore thyroid health include reintroducing healthy carbs, lowering excess iodine intake, reducing iron overload, balancing protein with collagen and calcium, and supporting adrenal-thyroid balance with progesterone under a physician's supervision

Thyroid problems are common, and the consequences go well beyond fatigue or weight gain. This small gland sits at the center of your metabolism, regulating how every cell in your body produces energy. When it falters, the ripple effects can touch your mood, digestion, fertility, and your long-term health.

What often gets overlooked is how much your daily food choices influence thyroid health. The nutrients you eat — or don't eat — determine whether your body produces enough active thyroid hormone to keep you warm, energized, and mentally sharp. Diets that cut out entire food groups, especially carbohydrates, can set the stage for a slow decline in thyroid function and may leave you relying on stress pathways to get through the day.

This raises an important question: What really happens when you remove carbs altogether and rely only on meat for fuel? To answer that, you need to understand how the carnivore diet interacts with your thyroid and why it places your metabolism under strain.

Why Carnivore Eating May Harm Thyroid Health

In a discussion on Jay Feldman's podcast "The Bioenergetic View," Feldman and co-hosts Mike Fave and Danny Roddy joined bioenergetic researcher Georgi Dinkov to examine holistic nutritionist Judy Cho's claims that low thyroid markers in her carnivore clients were not caused by the diet itself.¹

They challenged this view, arguing that thyroid suppression is linked to a lack of carbohydrates in the diet. Your body's ability to convert the inactive thyroid hormone T4 into the active hormone T3 depends on [glucose](#), which fresh meat provides in small amounts through glycogen but which is lost as meat ages.

- **The difference between fresh and aged meat is central to this argument** — Freshly killed meat still contains glycogen, a stored form of carbohydrate found in muscles and liver. Eating this meat means you're consuming some carbs along with protein — Dinkov described the ratio as close to one-to-one, though measured glycogen levels in muscle are generally much lower than that and fall quickly after slaughter.

However, once meat ages, the glycogen is broken down into lactic acid. This process removes the carbohydrate benefit, and Dinkov noted that bacterial activity during aging also raises endotoxin levels, leaving you with mostly protein, more

endotoxin, and compounds that may stress your metabolism.

- **Aged meat may change your hormonal balance** — With glycogen gone, your liver may lack the glucose needed to activate **thyroid hormones**. This can force your body to fall back on stress responses, raising **cortisol** and glucagon to keep blood sugar stable. Over time, this stress-driven energy system may wear down your thyroid, leaving you fatigued, cold, and more prone to weight gain, even when you think you are eating healthy.
- **The amino acid profile of meat adds another layer of stress** — Dinkov highlighted that muscle meats are loaded with amino acids — cysteine, methionine and tryptophan — that he says directly inhibit the thyroid gland's production of T4. That means the very foods you rely on to heal your metabolism may actually be interfering with your thyroid's ability to produce T4. Without balancing these proteins with gelatin, **collagen**, or calcium, you may create a hormonal environment that works against you.
- **The calcium-to-phosphorus ratio in meat is heavily skewed** — Dinkov explained that high phosphorus intake without enough calcium has a cumulative pro-aging effect on metabolism. This imbalance may slow your metabolic rate further, and a diet chronically low in calcium relative to phosphorus is a concern for long-term bone and muscle health. One workaround that Dinkov described is adding gelatin and calcium carbonate to ground meat — what he called a “Bulgarian burger” — to help restore balance and support energy production.
- **Eating only meat forces your body to make sugar out of protein instead of using carbs** — This backup process drains energy and pushes up stress hormones like cortisol. Dinkov explained that after eating a lot of meat without supporting carbohydrates, he often feels cold, which he takes as a sign that his blood sugar has dropped, and his stress system has kicked in. By contrast, he said that eating ground meat mixed with gelatin and calcium carbonate gives him a noticeable rise in core temperature and heart rate that he doesn't get from plain muscle meat.

How a Lack of Carbohydrates May Lead to Thyroid Decline

While Cho claimed that environmental factors or stressors explained her clients' thyroid issues, Dinkov disagreed. He argued that the diet itself is the most direct explanation for declining thyroid markers on carnivore diets — too few carbohydrates, too much phosphorus relative to calcium, and an excess of thyroid-inhibiting amino acids. As health coach Mike Fave put it, "Your hormonal function is dependent on carbohydrate."² Ignoring this, Feldman argued, requires denial and "mental gymnastics" that obscure the obvious.³

- **The lack of fiber in carnivore eating may add to the problem** — Dinkov noted that a carnivore diet provides no dietary fiber at all. Some researchers argue that without **fiber**, gut bacteria can shift toward more inflammatory patterns, such as gut dysbiosis. This may increase endotoxin load in your body, which can interfere with thyroid hormone function and further suppress energy production. Endotoxin is a bacterial byproduct that can pass from your gut into your bloodstream, where it may contribute to systemic inflammation.

In the context of a thyroid already under stress, this combination may be especially taxing. Just be aware of the fiber paradox: Fiber can be beneficial, but if you consume it when your gut is unhealthy, it can raise endotoxin and make symptoms worse. So, **heal your gut health** first — starting with easy-to-digest carbs like white rice and whole fruits — before adding beneficial fiber to your diet.

- **Iron overload is another hidden risk of carnivore diets** — Fave noted that many of the carnivore eaters he has worked with develop high ferritin and iron saturation levels, which promote oxidative stress. When stored iron interacts with polyunsaturated fats like **linoleic acid** (LA) already in your tissues, it can spark harmful free radical reactions that damage your mitochondria — the engines of your cells. This may weaken thyroid-driven metabolism even further and contribute to faster aging.

- **Revisiting lost medical knowledge about thyroid care** — According to Dinkov, older medical texts once recommended high-carbohydrate, moderate-protein, low-fat diets to boost thyroid function. Doctors at the time understood that your metabolism and thyroid health depended on having enough carbohydrates. That perspective changed when the “rate of living theory” took hold in the mid-20th century.

This theory claimed that the faster your metabolism ran, the shorter your lifespan would be, so lowering metabolic rate was promoted as beneficial. In Dinkov’s view, this shift in thinking opened the door for **low-carb diets** and may help explain why obesity and thyroid problems have become so widespread today.

- **Real-world signs of hormone disruption were tied back to diet** — Fave described how some of his clients on carnivore diets had high lab values for testosterone but still suffered from low energy, poor libido, and other hypogonadal symptoms. He attributed this mismatch to very high levels of sex hormone-binding globulin (SHBG), a protein that binds testosterone and makes it less available for use. In the panel’s view, these patterns reflect disrupted metabolism, not unrelated stressors as Cho suggested.

How to Protect Your Thyroid if You’ve Tried the Carnivore Diet

If you’ve been eating only meat and notice cold hands, stubborn weight gain, or low energy, your thyroid may be under pressure. The problem isn’t discipline — it’s likely the lack of healthy carbohydrates, the overload of certain amino acids, and the mineral imbalances that come with carnivore eating.

Your thyroid depends on glucose to function properly, and starving it of carbs can slow your metabolism and drive up stress hormones. The good news is you can help your body recover by restoring balance, lowering stress signals, and giving your thyroid what it actually needs.

- 1. Prioritize healthy carbohydrates every day** — A balanced diet rich in the right carbs — and free of ultraprocessed foods — feeds your mitochondria with the glucose they're designed to burn. If you've been eating low-carb or carnivore, you may have been starving those engines, which can slow healing and drain your energy.

Focus on whole fruits and white rice first, then gradually bring in root vegetables, legumes, and well-tolerated grains as your gut improves. Most adults do best with 250 grams of healthy carbs daily — more if you're very active — to give your thyroid the fuel it needs.

- 2. Reduce iodine overload** — Getting **too much iodine** is linked to thyroid dysfunction, and cutting back may help restore normal thyroid activity over time. That said, some processed grain products can be a hidden source.

Keeping iodine intake modest — below 200 micrograms per day — may help keep your thyroid from tipping into overdrive or autoimmunity, especially if you have a family history of thyroid disease. If you've struggled with unexplained thyroid symptoms, lowering excess iodine is a practical step to consider.

- 3. Address iron excess before it damages your thyroid** — **Excess iron** can quietly work against your thyroid. If you don't know your ferritin level, that's the first test to request — healthy levels are between 60 and 75 ng/mL.

High ferritin often means your body is storing too much iron, which can accumulate in tissues, including your brain, and fuel oxidative stress that may disrupt thyroid hormone function. Pair this with a gamma-glutamyl transferase (GGT) test — a liver enzyme that is also used as a marker of oxidative stress — to help gauge whether stored iron may be harming your metabolism.

If both ferritin and GGT are high, your thyroid may already be under strain. A practical option is to donate blood two to four times a year to pull iron out of storage, or ask your doctor about therapeutic phlebotomy if blood donation isn't an

option. This step may help protect your thyroid by lowering the oxidative stress that interferes with energy production. If you're considering these options, talk to your health care provider about whether they're appropriate for you.

- 4. Balance protein with collagen and calcium** — Eating only muscle meat floods your body with amino acids that may suppress thyroid function and leaves you short on calcium. To correct this, mix in collagen, gelatin, or tougher cuts with connective tissue. Adding calcium carbonate or [eggshell powder](#) to meals can help restore the calcium-to-phosphorus ratio, which may help keep your metabolism stronger over the long term. Think of it as building thyroid-friendly meals instead of just eating steak alone.
- 5. Support hormonal balance with progesterone, under medical supervision** — Your [adrenal glands](#) work hand in hand with your thyroid, and progesterone plays a key role in keeping both systems in balance. Without enough progesterone, adrenal stress may rise, dragging down thyroid function. Used under a physician's supervision, natural bioidentical progesterone may help stabilize your hormones, support a calmer mood, improve sleep, and restore energy. Because transmucosal progesterone requires a prescription, talk to your doctor about whether it is right for you as part of supporting the thyroid-adrenal system.

How to Use Progesterone

Before the detail that follows: Transmucosal progesterone therapy requires a prescription and a clinician's supervision. What is described below is how it is used under that supervision. It is not a protocol to begin on your own, and progesterone is not a supplement you should self-dose — it is a hormone, and the right dose, the right timing, and whether it is appropriate at all depend on your own circumstances. If you are pregnant, trying to conceive, on hormonal contraception or being treated for a hormone-sensitive condition, this needs a doctor before anything else.

It's also important to understand that progesterone is not a magic bullet, and that you get the most benefit by implementing a Bioenergetic diet approach that allows you to effectively burn glucose as your primary fuel without backing up electrons in your mitochondria that reduces your energy production. My book, "Your Guide to Cellular Health: Unlocking the Science of Longevity and Joy," covers this process in great detail.

Once you have dialed in your diet, an effective strategy that can help counteract estrogen excess is to take transmucosal progesterone (i.e., applied to your gums, not oral or transdermal), which is a natural estrogen antagonist. Progesterone is one of only three hormones I believe many adults can benefit from. (The other two are DHEA and pregnenolone.)

I do not recommend transdermal progesterone, as your skin expresses high levels of 5-alpha reductase enzyme, which causes a significant portion of the progesterone you're taking to be irreversibly converted primarily into allopregnanolone and cannot be converted back into progesterone.

Ideal Way to Administer Progesterone

Please note that when progesterone is used transmucosally on your gums as I advise, the FDA believes that somehow converts it into a drug and prohibits any company from advising that on its label. This is why companies promote their progesterone products as "topical."

However, please understand that it is perfectly legal for any physician to recommend an off-label indication for a drug to their patient. In this case, progesterone is a bioidentical hormone rather than a synthetic progestin, and the two have different safety profiles — the risks associated with progestins in the hormone therapy literature do not transfer straightforwardly to bioidentical progesterone. That is not the same as being risk-free at any dose. Progesterone is sedating, can affect mood, and interacts with other medications, so the dose must be established in collaboration with the prescribing clinician.

Dr. Ray Peat has done the seminal work in progesterone and probably was the world's greatest expert on progesterone. He wrote his Ph.D. on estrogen in 1982 and spent most of his professional career documenting the need to counteract the dangers of excess estrogen with low-LA diets and transmucosal progesterone supplementation.

He determined that most solvents do not dissolve progesterone well and discovered that vitamin E is the best solvent to optimally provide progesterone in your tissue. Vitamin E also protects you against damage from LA. You just need to be very careful about which vitamin E you use, as many supplemental vitamin E products are synthetic and do not provide the form your body uses.

It is imperative to avoid using any synthetic vitamin E (alpha tocopherol acetate – the acetate indicates that it's synthetic). Natural vitamin E will be labeled “d alpha tocopherol.” This is the pure D isomer, which is what your body can use.

There are also other vitamin E isomers, and you want the complete spectrum of tocopherols and tocotrienols, specifically the beta, gamma, and delta types, in the effective D isomer. Look for a label showing the full spectrum of tocopherols and tocotrienols in the D isomer form.

When it comes to application, my preferred approach is to dissolve either powdered or liquid progesterone in natural vitamin E – having established the dosing with your prescriber – and apply it directly to the gums. This transmucosal application allows for optimal absorption and use by the body. There are also premade vitamin E-based progesterone products on the market. Just make sure they're using natural vitamin E. The recommended time for application is 30 minutes before bed, as progesterone has an anti-cortisol effect and can increase GABA levels, promoting better sleep.

If you are a menstruating woman, you should take the progesterone during the luteal phase or the last half of your cycle, which can be determined by starting 10 days after the first day of your period and stopping the progesterone when your period starts.

If you are a male or non-menstruating woman, you can take the progesterone every day for four to six months and then cycle off for one week.

This is what I have been personally doing for over a year with very good results. I am a physician so do not have any problems doing this. If you aren't a physician, you should consult one before using this therapy, as transmucosal progesterone therapy requires a doctor's prescription.

FAQs About the Carnivore Diet and Thyroid Health

Q: How can the carnivore diet harm thyroid health?

A: The carnivore diet cuts out nearly all carbohydrates, which your body needs to convert the inactive hormone T4 into the active hormone T3. Without enough glucose from carbs, your body may rely on stress hormones like cortisol to maintain energy, which can wear down thyroid function over time.

Q: Does eating fresh meat protect thyroid health compared to aged meat?

A: Fresh meat still contains glycogen, a stored form of carbohydrate, so it provides some glucose along with protein. Aged meat loses this glycogen and, according to Dinkov, becomes high in endotoxin, which may disrupt metabolism and increase stress on your thyroid.

Q: How does iron overload affect my thyroid?

A: High ferritin, a marker of stored iron, is associated with oxidative stress that can damage mitochondria and interfere with thyroid hormone function. Testing both ferritin and GGT can help show whether stored iron may be harming your metabolism. If your levels are high, donating blood or asking your doctor about therapeutic phlebotomy can help lower iron and may help protect thyroid activity.

Q: What role do healthy carbohydrates play in thyroid recovery?

A: Carbohydrates are your body's preferred source of glucose, the fuel your thyroid relies on to activate hormones. Whole fruits, white rice, root vegetables, legumes, and well-tolerated grains provide steady energy that helps keep your metabolism strong. For most adults, aiming for 250 grams daily helps give your thyroid the fuel it needs.

Q: Which additional steps support thyroid function beyond diet?

A: Balancing muscle meat with collagen and calcium can help correct nutrient disparities that may suppress thyroid activity. Reducing excess iodine intake may help keep your thyroid from being overstimulated, while natural progesterone — used under a physician's supervision — may help stabilize hormones, ease stress, and improve sleep, all of which support thyroid health.

This article is for informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult a qualified health care provider before making changes to your health regimen.

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You can purchase pharmaceutical grade bioidentical progesterone as Progesterone Powder, Bioidentical Micronized Powder, 10 grams for about \$40 on many online stores like Amazon. That is nearly a year's supply, depending on the dose you choose.

However, you will need to purchase some small stainless steel measuring spoons as you will need a 1/64 tsp, which is 25 mg and a 1/32 tsp, which is 50 mg. A normal dose is typically 25 to 50 mg and is taken 30 to 60 minutes before bed, as it has an anti-cortisol function and will increase GABA levels for a good night's sleep.

If you are a menstruating woman, you should take the progesterone during the luteal phase or the last half of your cycle, which can be determined by starting 10 days after the first day of your period and stopping the progesterone when your period starts.

If you are a male or non-menstruating woman, you can take the progesterone every day for four to six months and then cycle off for one week. The best time of day to take progesterone is 30 to 60 minutes before bed as it has an anti-cortisol function and will increase GABA levels for a good night's sleep.

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Sources and References

- ^{1, 2, 3} [YouTube, Jay Feldman Wellness June 3, 2025](#)