

INTERVIEW:

Kevin Klatt, Ph.D. &
Katherine Pett, MS, RDN, LDN

Hey guys! Tell us a little bit about yourselves and your background.

Kevin: I'm a nutrition researcher and currently finishing up my clinical hours for the Registered Dietitian credential. My Ph.D. research focused on a number of topics broadly under the scope of metabolism, much of it falling in the spectrum of maternal/child nutrition and reproductive biology. Personally, I don't have a huge topical interest in any one area of nutrition — I am mostly interested in the methods of nutrition research and how we know what we think we know. Prior to my Ph.D., I did my bachelor's in biological anthropology and completed dietetics coursework.

Katherine: I'm an RDN and I did my MS in Biochemical and Molecular Nutrition. I currently work on the Nutrition Team with Conagra Brands and before that worked as an inpatient dietitian. I started my blog, [Nutrition Wonk](#), and weekly news email ([This Week in Nutrition](#)) while I was in grad school as a way to nerd out on nutrition science and history questions I couldn't easily find the answers to online. Prior to earning an MS in nutrition, I did my Bachelor's in Communications and a Masters in Education.

You recently started a podcast, n=1 (which you can find on [iTunes](#), [Stitcher](#), & [Spotify](#)), where you try out various popular diets for a 2–4 week period. What prompted you to take on this project?

Kevin: We had talked about starting a podcast but really didn't want to just talk about health/nutrition alone. Katherine and I were both interested in the science, but also the history, of different diets and had both individually experienced doing different diets in the past. That, coupled with a growing movement of anecdotal information driving the conversation in popular diet circles, informed the model for the current podcast. Experiences are as compelling if not more compelling than the evidence, so we wanted to make sure those were incorporated.

Katherine: What Kevin said. For everyone who talks about nutrition science online, we all know that feeling of having a commenter who says “Well, have you tried it? I did and it was great for me!” We wanted to dig into the evidence, but also to acknowledge that an individual's experience while following a way of eating is important.

What do you hope to communicate to your audience through this endeavor (or what do you hope they take away)?

Kevin: One thing that I hope listeners will take away is that this podcast really is about individual experiences. Many have told us that the podcast name should be n=2, but I think as folks listen

in to the series of diets we try (we've done about 3 at this point), Katherine and I end up doing the individual diets very differently. The impact of any diet is influenced by everything from your baseline diets to your preferences. Anecdotal claims about diets are not controlled feeding trials, and everyone tends to make numerous changes from their baseline diets that might impact why they feel the way that they do.

I also hope our podcast audience thinks that we are so funny that they recommend us to start our very own niche sketch comedy show about nutrition that is highly downloaded by the biohacker community. But seriously, I do hope that we make the conversation about diets a bit more light-hearted; it can get very intense online, often conspiratorial, and the discussion around diet likely contributes to problematic relationships that folks develop with food. I hope cracking a joke or two about the seriousness of individual nutrients in a dietary pattern can help folks realize that diet is important but not as serious as some make it out to be.

Katherine: I hope we reach two populations — the nutrition interested and the nutrition professional — and that they each take away something different. For the nutrition interested, I'd like them to hear about the experience of people who *don't have a single perspective on the best way of eating* try different diets. The way diet proponents describe their own experiences and select testimonials are designed to show their preferred way of eating in an idealized light. While we both have our individual preferences, I don't think either of us believes there is a "best" diet for all people. Our experience trying each way of eating hopefully provides a review that is open-minded without trying to convert anyone. For the nutrition-professional, I hope we provide a decent overview of the evidence for each diet they can use to kickstart their own research. I'd like to provide a bit more of a broad-minded view around how different ways of eating work for different people.

Thus far, you have tackled the ketogenic diet. What are the future diets you plan to experiment with? Are there any you are looking forward to or those you are anxious about?

Kevin: At this point, we've also done the DASH diet. Katherine did Paleo. We've chatted with a guest speaker who did Carnivore & another who we will chat with did an all "snack food" diet. We'll also be undertaking whole foods plant based in the near future. There's a long history of diets to choose from and we're happy to hear suggestions!

Katherine: Yes, please send suggestions! But before you do, we aren't interested in doing anything that is *clearly* not a good choice, like crash-diets (at least, I'm not).

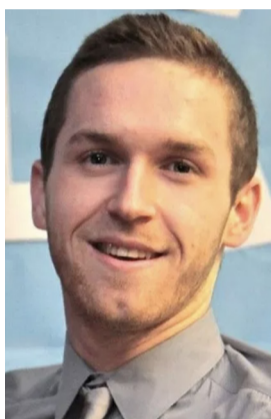
Both of you have formal training in nutritional science and are aware of the limitations of n-of-1 trials. For those looking to do their own n-of-1 diet experiments, what potential pitfalls or words of caution would you want them to be aware of before diving in?

Kevin: I think that our own cognitive biases and pre-conceived notions of the diet can really impact how you feel while doing the diet. Having done some of the diets we've tried in the past, it's jarring to see how different the experience is when you aren't really buying into the tribal/communal parts of diet culture. I would've told you keto was amazing because I lost weight on it in high school, and really pushed the negative side effects that I felt to the side because I felt like I was part of some righteously woke group. Trying to undertake diets and assess the effects on your subjective measures of how you feel is almost impossible.

I'd also caution that most folks make huge shifts in their dietary patterns, and then make conclusions about individual nutrients/foods. This is common for folks committed to low-carb/ low-fat/vegan/paleo etc. From our own experiences, changing dozens of dietary components at once, we really can't isolate the effects of

the minutia. Lastly, I'd say that we are not really doing n=1's; that would require being extremely systematic and rigorous about assessments of baseline dietary exposures, removals/additions of exposures, re-introductions of exposures, wash out periods, etc. Much of what we do in the podcast, and what folks tend to do in real life, is capturing the totality of the experience, not a scientific approach to identifying causal factors involved in individual physiology.

Katherine: There is truly no control in an n=1 diet experiment unless you can access other versions of yourself in the multiverse (if you can, please contact us and we will interview you on the podcast). I would strongly urge anyone interested in making major dietary changes to connect with their healthcare providers and make sure they have qualified support! ♦



Kevin C. Klatt, Ph.D., is a nutrition researcher and current dietetic intern living in the Washington D.C. area. Kevin is an active runner/swimmer and enjoys writing, tech, and cooking while actively fighting for real iced coffee and against the invasion of cold brew. You can learn more about his research and funding at About.me/kcklatt.



Katherine Pett, MS, RDN is a nutritionist in Chicago, IL on the Nutrition Team with Conagra Brands. She spends too much money on books and loves those Hallmark holiday movies. Learn more about her background and disclosures at TheNutritionWonk.com/about.