

# Nutrition

## fact sheet

## Popular Diets Reviewed

By the time you read this, there may already be a new best-selling diet book heading the list, but with some help from current or former ADA media spokespeople we have put together this fact sheet to give you the scoop on current popular diets.

**Dr. Phil's Ultimate Weight Solution**  
*The Ultimate Weight Solution: The 7 Keys to Weight Loss Freedom* by Phillip McGraw, PhD, Free Press, 2003.

**Diet Summary** The theme of this program is that behavior modification and cognitive restructuring, along with a healthy diet and exercise, can lead to permanent weight management. Claiming an 80 percent success rate, the program's key points offer behavioral and nutritional advice ranging from portion control to supplement recommendations. Foods are divided into two categories: high response foods (good) and low response foods (bad).

While some of the book's advice is good (recycling behavior modification strategies that have been used in weight control programs for decades), several of the book's points contain erroneous or outdated nutrition and dietary recommendations. Additionally, the *Ultimate Weight Solution* includes seemingly simple advice for dealing with complicated emotional, eating and family issues. Without proper supervision, managing these issues alone can lead to ultimate dietary disaster. Dr. Phil suggests enlisting a 'circle of support,' includ-

ing a nutritionist with 'technical expertise;' however, this advice comes late in the book.

**And for adolescents...**

*The Ultimate Weight Loss Solution for Teens: The 7 Keys to Weight Freedom* by Jay McGraw, Free Press, 2003.

Written by Dr. Phil's son, this book is essentially a gentler version of the original *Ultimate Weight Solution*. While I do like the way it adapts the 7 Keys for kids with softer, hopeful language, this diet is still comprised of recycled behavior modification tips and unrealistically simple solutions to treating obesity and eating disorders.

—Lisa Dorfman, MS, RD, LMHC,  
Licensed Psychotherapist

**The "New" Atkins Diet**

*Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution: Revised and Improved* by Robert C. Atkins, MD, Avon, 2001.

**Diet Summary** Arguably one of the most famous fad diets, the Atkins Diet program restricts carbohydrates and focuses on eating mostly protein with the use of vitamin and mineral supplements. According to the program, this will alter a body's metabolism so it will burn stored fat while building muscle mass. The "new" Atkins Diet is the same diet with a more liberal maintenance plan.

With the "new" Atkins diet, some of the sensationalism is gone and there is heavy promoting of low-carb bars

and food products from Atkins Nutritionals, Inc. But the bottom line is still the same. Carbs are demonized and there are major restrictions on fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and low-fat dairy foods, which contradicts everything we know about health promotion and disease prevention.

—Keith Ayoob, EdD, RD, FADA

**The Zone Diet**

*The Zone: Revolutionary Life Plan to Put Your Body in Total Balance for Permanent Weight Loss* by Barry Sears, MD, Regan Books, 1995.

**Diet Summary** Promoting a "balanced nutritional approach," the Zone Diet is a complex eating plan that divides each meal into proportions of 40 percent carbohydrates, 30 percent proteins and 30 percent fats. The "Zone" refers to the state in which the body is at its physical peak, presumably from following this diet.

While the Zone Diet is closer to what most dietetics professionals would recommend compared to other fad diets, there are still better nutrition and exercise programs that are less complicated and frustrating than constantly measuring proportions and counting calories.

—Althea Zanecosky, MS, RD

**South Beach Diet**

*The South Beach Diet: The Delicious, Doctor-Designed, Foolproof Plan for Fast and Healthy Weight Loss* by Arthur Agoston, MD, Rodale Press, 2003.

**Diet Summary** Comprised of three phases, the South Beach Diet begins by banning carbohydrates such as fruit, bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and baked goods and allowing normal-size portions of meat, poultry, shellfish, vegetables, eggs and nuts. Dieters are told they will lose between eight and 13 pounds in the first two weeks during the “detoxification” phase. The second phase reintroduces “good carbs” (as defined using an online glycemic index) and dieters expect to lose one to two pounds per week until the weight goal is reached. The third phase is the least restrictive, allowing the dieters to eat pretty much anything in moderation.

The theory behind the South Beach Diet is that the faster sugars and starches are digested, the more weight is gained. Instead, the diet will cause weight loss because it is a low-calorie plan with an average intake of about 1,400 to 1,500 calories per day. The diet’s first phase promotes potentially dangerous accelerated weight loss; however, the second and third phases emphasize whole grains, lean proteins and dairy, unsaturated fats and fruits and vegetables, in addition to consistent meal times, snacks, a healthy dessert and plenty of water.

—Dawn Jackson, RD, LD

### **Raw Food Diets**

*The Raw Life: Becoming Natural in an Unnatural World* by Paul Nison, 343 Publishing Company, 2000, and *Raw, the Uncooked Book* by Juliano Brotman and Erika Lenkert, Regan Books, 1999.

**Diet Summary** Various versions of raw food diets exist, but they share the same

basic principle: Cooked foods lose the natural vitamins, nutrients and enzymes necessary to build a strong immune system. They recommend eating only fruits and vegetables picked ripe from the tree, garden or vine (organic preferred), nuts or seeds. Some raw food diets claim that it is “not natural” to eat sea vegetables, and others say that they are very important to include in the diet.

Raw food diets may be high in fiber and low in total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and calories, but they restrict so many important foods that it becomes a challenge to get all the nutrients the body needs. For example, avoiding all animal foods presents a challenge in getting enough vitamins B12 and D.

—Claudia M. González, MS, RD, LD/N

### **Sugar Busters**

*The New Sugar Busters! Cut Sugar to Trim Fat* by H. Leighton Steward; Morrison C. Bethea, MD; Sam S. Andrews, MD; Luis A. Balart, MD, Ballatine Books, 1998.

**Diet Summary** The basic tenet of Sugar Busters is that all sugars, including the sugar derived from complex carbohydrates and starches, are “toxic” because they produce excess insulin, which causes our bodies to store sugar as fat and make cholesterol. According to the book, foods with a high glycemic index produce a greater insulin response and fat storage. The book concludes with a list of acceptable foods and foods to avoid, a 14-day sample meal plan, and Sugar Busters! recipes. The diet is recommended as appropriate for children, pregnant

women, people with diabetes, hypoglycemia sufferers and persons with a history of cardiovascular disease.

The carbohydrate/insulin response theory as a cause of weight gain has become popular in fad diets, but there is no evidence that excess insulin release causes obesity in people with normal pancreatic function. Obesity is more likely a result of a decline in physical activity and increase in calorie intake than increased sugar or carbohydrate consumption. While the authors mention that protein foods and fats should also be limited, some of the recipes suggest the contrary, such as the filet mignon recipe for four that includes four 10-ounce filets, a cup of blue cheese and a half-pound of bacon.

—Kathleen Zelman, MPH, RD, LD

### **Recommended Reading**

- *American Dietetic Association Complete Food and Nutrition Guide* by Roberta Larson Duyff, MS, RD, FADA, CFCS, John Wiley & Sons, 2002
- *DiETING for Dummies*, second edition by Jane Kirby, RD, Wiley Publishing, 2004
- *The Way to Eat* by David L. Katz, MD, MPH, FACPM and Maura H. Gonzalez, MS, RD, Sourcebooks, 2002
- *365 Days of Healthy Eating from the American Dietetic Association* by Roberta Larson Duyff, MS, RD, FADA, CFCS, John Wiley, 2004
- *ADA Guide to Healthy Eating for Kids: How Your Children Can Eat Smart from 5 to 12* by Jodie Shield, MEd, RD and Mary Catherine Mullen, MS, RD, John Wiley, 2002
- *ADA Guide to Eating Right When You Have Diabetes* by Maggie Powers, MS, RD, CDE, John Wiley, 2003
- *ADA Guide to Better Digestion* by Leslie Bonci, MPH, RD, John Wiley, 2003.



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