

Nutrition

fact sheet

Popular Diets Reviewed, Part 2

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 these facts to give you the scoop on current popular diets.

The South Beach Diet: The Delicious, Doctor-Designed, Foolproof Plan for Fast and Healthy Weight Loss by Arthur Agaston, 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*

French Women Don’t Get Fat: The Secret of Eating for Pleasure by Mireille Guiliano, Knopf, 2004

Diet Summary: French Women Don’t Get Fat, like many other diet books, is a blend of some insight, shaky science and sheer speculation. The author, who is not a nutrition or weight loss professional and doesn’t claim to be, bases her advice on her own and her friends’ personal experiences and observations she’s made through living in France. She does make some recommendations, though, which can be supported by science. For instance, eating soup and eating more vegetables, which have been found to help reduce calorie intake naturally. Also, she recommends walking for exercise and weight training for women over forty, which most experts would agree is a terrific strategy.

However, the author makes some questionable dietary claims, such as that leeks are a mild diuretic, have a “magical” quality, and cause weight loss (there is no science backing these claims). She also advises people to start dieting through a semi-fast, eating predominantly leek soup. While most people would lose weight using this method, it’s not nutritionally adequate or a way of eating which can be maintained over the long term. Learning consistent eating habits is a more proven way to lose weight and keep it off.

Although the author says Americans wouldn’t be fat if we ate the way the French do (the French have about half of America’s overweight and obesity rate) French women do get fat—and the obesity rate in France is growing quickly. —*Katherine Tallmadge, MA, RD*

Eat Right 4 Your Type: The Individualized Diet Solution to Staying Healthy, Living Longer & Achieving Your Ideal Weight by Peter D’Adamo, G. P. Putman’s, 1996

Diet Summary: The author, a naturopathic physician, contends that the key to good health is eating optimally according to your blood type. If you are a Type O (about 46

percent of the population), you are in for a challenge—no beans, wheat or dairy products. While special consideration is given to one's ethnic origins—African, Asian or Caucasian—in general, all Type Os are the original hunter-gatherers and need to eat meat and avoid grains; Type As are meant to be vegetarians; Type Bs do well as omnivores, tolerating a variety of food, and are the only blood type that can thrive on dairy products.

Alternative suggestions for foods to be avoided within each food group are provided and, with effort, nutritional adequacy could be achieved. Readers are encouraged to derive their nutrition from food, but the author recognizes that each blood type may need specific additional supplements.

Eat Right 4 Your Type pigeonholes the reader into dietary plans based only on blood type and does not take into consideration any individual variances. The general statements that suggest all blood type populations have specific problematic foods in common are not supported by current scientific research.

—Dave Grotto, RD, LD

Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution: Revised and Improved by Robert C. Atkins, 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. But, the bottom line is still the same. Carbs are demonized and there are major restrictions on fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans and low-fat dairy foods that contradict everything we know about health promotion and disease prevention.

—Keith Ayoob, EdD, RD, FADA

The 3-Hour Diet by Jorge Cruise, Collins, 2005.

The basic rules for following this diet include: eat within one hour of waking up in the morning; eat every three hours; and do not eat within three hours of going to bed. While some studies suggest that eating more frequently throughout the day can help you lose weight, the jury is still out on whether this is physiologically true. Also, there is no proof that going three hours between meals is the magic number or that you'll lose more weight if you keep your calorie intake and

expenditure constant by following such a plan.

Overall, the book is positive with a sensible and balanced program. For those who don't mind eating by the clock, this book may make losing a few pounds more simple; but it would have been better had it made physical activity an equally important component for long-term weight loss.

—Elisa Zied, RD, CDN

Is It Right for You?

Successful weight loss means making small changes toward a healthy lifestyle. Make sure your weight loss plan is right for you. Does it include:

- Foods from all five food groups?
- The right number of servings from each group?
- Foods you will enjoy eating for the rest of your life?
- Foods you can buy at the supermarket?
- Some of your favorite foods?
- Foods that fit your budget and lifestyle?
- Regular physical activity or exercise?

If the answer is "yes" to all the questions, your weight loss plan is right for you. For names of registered dietitians in your area who can develop a personalized weight management plan, visit www.eatright.org.



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