

The South Beach Diet

Summary and review of diet by Elizabeth Wurdock, R.D.-eligible
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What the Authors Claim:

The South Beach diet proposes that the use of specific carbohydrates, and healthy fats can be used to attain a weight loss. The diet has three phases similar to those in Atkins, but considered more liberal due to the incorporation of a variety of foods in the last phase of the diet. The diet is based on the glycemic index of foods and uses the index to integrate specific foods back into the diet. Proponents of the diet suggest that eating the wrong carbohydrates leads to insulin resistance and weight gain. Because of such components as phytochemicals and fiber, that have proven health benefits, differences do exist in the type of carbohydrate. The rise in blood sugar after carbohydrate is eaten is not the predominant factor in weight gain. Instead the amount of total calories eaten is the major factor affecting weight loss or gain. Glycemic index looks at the affect of specific foods on blood sugars and how much they are raised after eating each respective food. By including foods that do not raise blood sugar as much, such as those with a low glycemic index, the South Beach diet claims that dieters will have less insulin response and ultimately lose weight.

Why it works:

During phase one of the South Beach diet the body depletes its storage form of glucose known as glycogen. Due to the diuretic affect of the diet water and sodium is also lost in the initial phase of the diet. The body than enters a state of ketosis, which also causes one's hunger level to decrease. Overall the diet will be lower in total energy than previously being consumed and more weight loss will be seen.

The plan itself:

Phase 1- Two Weeks of Restraint

The first phase of the diet allows a lot of protein, certain fat and carbohydrates that are considered low-glycemic. Avoid all fruit, starch and dairy. Unlike Atkins the South Beach diet includes and recommends choosing low-fat or fat-free meats and cheeses. This phase of the diet lasts for 2 weeks. The diet claims that by the end of this phase your cravings will have vanished. It also promises that you will not be hungry and if you do feel hungry you could be limiting yourself too much.

Phase 2- More Liberal Meal Plans

When you enter phase 2 of the diet you gradually reintroduce carbohydrates from a select list. But not any carbohydrate, there are certain carbs that you can choose from. Foods with a low glycemic index are progressively incorporated back into your diet. A healthy weight loss of 1-2 pounds a week is advised in phase 2. The South Beach diet includes fruit, sweet potatoes, whole grain products and whole-wheat pasta. You stay in the second phase of your diet until you reach your target weight. If you start gaining weight you can re-enter phase one and start over.

Phase 3- The Rest of Your Life

Similar to phase 4 of the Atkins diet, this is the most “liberal” part of the diet plan. If you begin to gain weight you go back to phase 1 and start over again. This is the maintenance phase: how you'll eat for the rest of your life. It's the most liberal stage. It is recommended that if you begin to put weight back on that you go back to phase 1 for a week or two and re-start the diet.

What the experts say about the South Beach Diet:

Although this diet incorporates more variety than some of the low carbohydrate high protein diets, some controversies still exist. South Beach uses of the glycemic index to make food choices. Health professionals do not use the glycemic index in meal planning due to the fact that the index can be quite variable. The glycemic index is the area under the curve of 50g of a specific food relative to the area under the curve of 50g

of either 50g glucose or white bread. For example, by comparing a specific food item to glucose or white bread, we can see the differing affects on blood sugar and determine where they fit on the glycemic index. One problem is that the way your prepare a food item can greatly alter the glycemic index, additionally ripeness, cooking procedures, particle size and many other factors can also influence the glycemic index. The index looks at specific foods when eaten alone, but most people do not just eat one food item at a time. Most meals are mixed with a combination of carbohydrate, protein, and fat.