

# 6 Absolute Truths about the 5-Factor Diet

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Every so often, a diet comes along that seems to capture the imagination of the public. It's happened before with such widespread diets as the Atkins Revolution, the South Beach Diet, and Nutrisystem™. A new diet has joined the ranks of these popular, yet often criticized diet plans. It's called the 5 Factor diet, and it comes in the form of a new book by fitness guru Harley Pasternak. She has appeared all over national television promoting the book, including such outlets as the Oprah show and Tyra Banks's morning program. She claims as clients such celebrities as John Mayer and Halle Berry (and who wouldn't want a body like Halle Berry, after all?). Of course, all of this is incidental to the central question: what is the 5 Factor diet all about, and does it really work?

## **The 5 Factor Diet: A Brief Overview**

Obviously, any diet book worth its salt cannot be adequately summarized in just a few lines. In fact, it is this very type of summary that has given other diets a bit of a bad name in the general public. Take the Atkins diet, for instance. Because of oversimplification, the vast majority of the uninitiated public (as in, those who have not taken the time to read the book), believe that the Atkins diet is about cutting out carbs completely, for the rest of your life. This is the furthest thing from the truth, and even a cursory reading of the book would show you otherwise. For this reason, we hesitate to simplify any diet, when the book itself would be so much more enlightening. Then again, it would hardly serve the purposes of this report to say: go read it for yourself. So let's take a look at the 5 Factor Diet with the understanding that no synopsis can do any book (diet or otherwise) much justice.

The 5 Factor diet is built around the glycemic index. If you're unfamiliar with the glycemic index, it is basically a way for us to tell which foods have the most damaging effect on our blood sugar when we consume them. Scientists and nutritionists believe that foods with a severe impact on the GI cause us to gain weight more rapidly, due to changing spikes in our hunger levels and slower metabolization of the calories themselves. The diet advocates a daily plan of five meals per day, with each meal made up of five components (the "5" in the 5 Factor Diet). These components are a lean protein, a complex carbohydrate, fiber, a good fat, and a sugar free drink.

In addition to the call for five daily meals made up of those five components, Pasternak places great emphasis on the importance of exercise in the diet plan. This in

itself, it must be said, sets it apart from many similar diet plans, and is a refreshing change of pace. So many diet books concentrate exclusively on the eating portion of the plan, and treat exercise as an afterthought. Of course, there is good reason for this from a marketing standpoint. It has been shown time and again that the only thing Americans loathe more than dieting, it's exercise. Come out with a diet plan that eschews (or at least downplays the importance of) exercise, and you have a much better chance of success (even if the dieter themselves does not).

Pasternak's emphasis on exercise is doubtlessly born of her background as a fitness trainer. It is a well guarded secret of the Hollywood stars that they got those ripped abs and toned cores not through any secret diet pills or plans, but through hours of grueling exercise each day. Of course, the average American doesn't have the will (much less the time) to do so much exercise, but we typically have time to do more than we think.

Once again, with the exercise plan (and, truthfully, this is where the book starts to wear on you with the gimmicks), it is put in such a way that it fits the titular "5" of the 5 Factor Diet plan. Five days a week of exercise, five exercises, with each exercise taking five minutes to do. Is it reasonable to think that this is the optimal amount and mixture of exercise, as compared to anything else, or is it just put in this way so as to fit with the theme? Well, that's up to the reader to decide, but the opinion of this writer is probably clear. Still, points are still given for the emphasis of exercise in the first place, and perhaps the 5 gimmick will help disciples of the diet remember exactly what they're supposed to do, keeping it simple and thus easier to follow. There's something to be said for that as well.

## **The Food of The 5 Factor Diet**

The one area in which Pasternak deviates from the number five is the number of days in the week you are to follow the diet plan strictly. She calls for six out of seven days, with the seventh being a built-in cheat day, where the follower can eat anything they like from morning till night. There is some dissension in the fitness community about diets that call for such a cheat day, but it is there, and if you can stick to just one day, it will probably be okay. But let's talk about the other six days, and what you're supposed to be eating.

According to the 5 Factor plan, each meal must consist of the five nutritional make-ups we discussed earlier. Lean protein, complex carbs, fiber, healthy fat, and a sugar free drink. An example of this type of meal could be a piece of lean beef (sirloin or such), a small salad, a serving of asparagus, and a glass (or more) of water. Of course, this is only one example. There are a myriad of possibilities on this diet, as long as they meet the requirements set forth by the author. She helpfully gives plenty of suggestions for foods meeting all of the requirements, and with a mix and match system, boredom shouldn't be too much of a problem on this diet plan.

## **Just Another Fad Diet?**

Well, that's hard to answer. Taken as a whole, the Atkins diet would probably not be fairly called a fad diet, yet it is the most commonly cited example of such. The first two weeks of Atkins, or the "induction" phase, would certainly fit the bill, with the limiting of carbohydrates to below 20 grams per day. However, the following phases of the diet, where carbohydrates are slowly but surely added back in, most meaningfully in the form of complex carbs and high

fiber choices, would better fit the definition of a sensible diet plan. The same goes for the 5 Factor Diet. Taken as a whole, with its strategies and eating recommendations, and its call for vigorous and regular exercise, it's hard to pick out anything about the diet that would lend itself to the terms "crash diet" or "fad diet". Yet, on the other hand, there are always concerns along these lines. Here's why.

Any time you have a regimented eating plan such as this, no matter how diverse, eventually it's going to get irritating and old. The human being craves diversity and flexibility. This, however, is exactly what got many overweight people into trouble in the first place. They are unable to control themselves and find that complete freedom leads to bad choices. That's why diets such as these work so well—in the short term. Dieters like to feel as if they have regained a certain amount of control over their eating. However, while the weight loss is sure to come (not just on the 5 Factor Diet, but on any regimented eating plan), it's easy to "fall off the wagon". For that reason, any diet that begins making very strict and planned out eating propositions must be regarded, at least in part, as a fad diet.

At the same time, let's take nothing away from the sound eating principles involved in the 5 Factor Diet. And they are sound, and nutritionally expedient. Still, the diet, like so many others, is kind of like taking the long way around a beautiful forest. The Forest of Common Sense, let's call it. It is a path many other diets have taken, including Atkins, South Beach, The Movie Star Diet, and so many others. The plain fact of the matter is, if you take in more calories than your burn, you will gain weight. If you taken in fewer, you will lose weight. It's just that simple, and all of these diets are basically low calorie diets in disguise. All this talk about burning ketones or the glycemic index or eating like Jesus did in

Biblical times is just a way of masking that simple common sense principal. Is there anything wrong with that? Perhaps not, but the reader should be aware of it before believing that they've suddenly found the magical fountain from which to drink.

## **The 5 Factor Diet and Longevity**

It will come as no surprise to careful readers how long Harley Pasternak recommends you stay on the diet. Three guesses, and the first two don't count. That's right: five weeks. Of course, this comes with a disclaimer that you may have to stay on it longer if you have more than ten pounds to lose. Let me ask you this, dear reader: how many people are going to go out and buy a diet book and follow a strict eating plan such as this if they are a mere ten pounds overweight? This is another occasion where the gimmick gets in the way of what could be a sound book on nutrition and fitness. All the same, it's marketing. Pasternak probably wouldn't have been on Oprah if she'd named her book "The Sensible Eating Plan" or something boring like that.

## **Should You Try The 5 Factor Diet?**

If you're one of those people who need a regimented and easy to follow plan for weight loss, then it might be worth a shot. There's certainly nothing inherently unhealthy or unsafe about the diet. And if it gets you in the habit of doing regular exercise, so much the better. The only danger is this: eating in such a regimented way may give you the feeling, once you decide you've had enough of the plan, that you never want to see a piece of lean chicken or beef again. This would be a terrible tragedy. These are low calorie, nutritious foods that should be a part of any American's diet, whether they are trying to lose weight or not. This is why these diet plans are



frustrating. People see them as a means to an end, rather than a way of permanent lifestyle. Diets shouldn't be a break from the constant inhalation of snack foods and corn chips. Corn chips and snack foods should be an occasional treat (if even that) and a break from a normal diet plan.

The cheat day built into the plan is enough to recommend it for some, while strongly doing the opposite for others. Only you can decide which category you fall into. Some people have the willpower to have a cheat day, eat whatever they want, and then get back on it the next day with no questions asked. Others find themselves crippled and weakened by the cheat day, and it causes the next day to be harder than ever. Often, a cheat day is simply an exit from the diet in total, and this is no good.

## **Where To Buy The 5 Factor Diet**

It won't be hard to find. As with all products and books featured on Oprah, the 5 Factor Diet has become an immediate bestseller, and you won't have to go any further than your local mega-bookstore chain to pick yourself up a copy. It goes for about \$17 in hardback, or you can buy it online at such retailers as Amazon and probably save yourself a few bucks. In addition to the diet book itself, the plan recommends that you do several exercises that require dumbbells and a stability ball, so you may want to make room in your budget to purchase those, or get a gym membership. And speaking of membership, for \$20 a month, you can join the official 5 Factor Diet website, where they promise regular tips, a message board and other amenities to help you on your journey. The content of the book itself is complimentary with the membership plan.

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