

Is the South Beach Diet a low-carb diet?

With number of fad diets out there, it's a wonder anyone is keeping up these days. Eat a low-carb diet. No, eat a low-fat diet. Wait, eat fat with carbs but only when Mars and Jupiter align.

The fact is that fad diets come and go. The key to losing weight is a balanced and sensible plan that takes into account your life. I mean, really, who has time to weigh six ounces of banana? Or eat exactly ten more calories?

So, in a word, no – the South Beach Diet is not a low-carb diet. It's not a low-fat diet either. Instead, it emphasizes the right carbs, fats and proteins to help you lose weight.

Consuming refined carbs, like those found in highly processed foods, leads to spikes in your blood sugar levels. To control these spikes, your body over-produces insulin leading to dips in your blood sugar levels. Those dips cause you to crave (and eat) more carbs which raises your blood sugar levels again. This cycle is known as insulin resistance or your body's inability to process fuel, fats or sugar properly. The diet's objective is to regulate your blood sugar, end cravings and help you lose weight.

On the diet, you will enjoy a variety of wholesome, nutritious foods – meat and fish, cheese, healthy oils and nuts, vegetables and the right carbohydrates. The diet is organized in three phases. Phase 1's goal is to rid you of your carbohydrate cravings and adjust your blood chemistry. Phase 2 teaches you how to use the diet's principles in your everyday life while achieving your weight loss goals. Phase 3 is how you will eat post-weight loss. At this point, the diet's principles should be so second nature that they become part of a larger healthier lifestyle rather than a weight-loss program.

The three phases are built for flexibility – you can switch between phases as you see fit. If you have fallen off the wagon, switch back to Phase I for a couple of weeks and get back on track. Or go back to Phase 2 to lose some extra weight. Maintain at Phase 3 when life just seems too overwhelming.

Instead of emphasizing low-carb, the South Beach diet aims to teach you how to eat for health. It is based in realism – there are times when you will eat things that aren't the best for you. That's ok; there's a way to get back on track. The objective is to take into account the every-day reality of your life, incorporate foods you like to eat and keep you on the road to health.

After all, we don't know when Mars and Jupiter align either.