

Website Evaluation Assignment: South Beach Diet & Nutrisystems

South Beach Diet: <http://www.southbeachdiet.com/diet/>

The website for the South Beach diet focuses on eating plans that fit with a person's lifestyle and that are designed by doctors (Agatston, 2013). The website claims that people can eat their favorite foods while losing weight, maintaining weight loss, and eliminating cravings (Agatston, 2013). Although the diet claims that people can enjoy their favorite foods, there are 3 stages of the diet plan, which include elimination and restriction which seems to contradict the claim to losing weight while eating favorite foods (Agatston, 2013).

The website has 3 main sections. The first section details the diet: details about the diet, a profile of Dr. Agatston who created the South Beach Diet, a section on determining gluten sensitivity and how to tailor the diet to be gluten-free, lists of what to eat, and success stories. The second major section is for food products such as protein, cereal, and granola bars; smoothies; and desserts. Most of the items are 100 calories per serving.

The South Beach website (Agatston, 2013) lists resources such as online tools, books, interactive tools, and mobile applications. The site mentions "no point system" which leads people to assume that it is a simple plan to follow, which is in fact true because there is simply a list of foods you can and cannot eat based on which phase you are in. This simple approach appeals to people who want to be in control of their choices

as they lose weight as opposed to people who desire a plan that is more rigid and structured.

The diet focuses mostly on protein and fiber intake as a way to lose and maintain weight. Phase 1 includes “eliminating cravings, rapid weight loss, and lasts for 14 days” (Agatston, 2013). Dr. Agatston’s Phase 1 focuses on lean protein, vegetables, nuts and seeds, reduced or no-fat dairy products, eggs, beans and legumes, sugar-free or alternative sweeteners, and monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. At first glance, the diet seems balanced and varied despite the restrictions. However, Phase 1 only allows certain vegetables and no fruit. The only vegetables listed are artichokes, eggplant, tomatoes, bell peppers, spinach, zucchini, and broccoli. Fruit is not allowed, however in Phase 1 people can enjoy 75-100 calories of “sweet treats” that include gelatin, syrups, popsicles, jams, and jellies (Agatston, 2013). People would be better off eating fruits with natural sugars because they get the added benefit of natural fiber and vitamins instead of consuming the calories from refined sugar and foods containing alternative sweeteners (Thompson et al. 2012, p. 122-123).

Phase 2 allows for some added nutrients because people can eat carrots, certain fruits, and starchy vegetables in addition to the vegetables for Phase 2 (Agatston, 2013). It allows for whole grains such as oats, barley quinoa, and whole-grain bread and whole-wheat pasta (Agatston, 2013).

The Phase 3 overview states that people can “enjoy any food in moderation” but the food list for phase 3 lists same items as Phase 2 (Agatston, 2013). It also recommends returning to phase 1 and 2 if people start gaining weight or if cravings return (Agatston, 2013) which suggests that Phase 3 is not a lifestyle that can be maintained in

the long-term.

Overall the South Beach diet gets a B. This grade is based on the fact that it promotes eating less fat and less sugar than the typical American diet (Agatston, 2013). However, the diet limits which fruits and vegetables can be eaten so if it is followed as a lifestyle, deficiencies of Vitamin K from lack of deep green leafy vegetables and lack of Vitamin C from daily citrus or other fruit sources would be major concerns (Thompson, Manore. 2012. p. 218 – 222).

NutriSystem

While the South Beach diet is also a weight management plan, Nutrisystem seems to emphasize the visible transformation more while South Beach focuses on controlling cravings. South Beach promotes variety, flexibility, and choosing your foods (Agatston, 2013). Nutrisystem sells meal packages and supplements so it is much more structured (Nutrisystems, 1999). Nutrisystems provides separate tabs for meal plans designed for men and women although upon closer examination, the offerings are the same and the only difference is how the information is organized and visually represented (Nutrisystems, 1999).

The Nutrisystem website states that the meals are balanced even though many of the meals contain essentially the same nutrients: processed carbohydrate, dairy, and little vegetables or fiber and people are to go to the grocery store to buy add-ins such as fresh fruits and it is also encouraged that people take vitamins and supplements (Nutrisystem, 1999). Most of the nutrients of this diet are found in the grocery add-ins that people buy in addition to their daily plans. It's unclear how much of these add-ins are recommended, but it is up to people to follow the guidelines and supplement their nutrition with

“SmartCarbs, PowerFuel, Vegetables, and Extras” as well as with vitamins and supplements (Nutrisystems, 1999).

Nutrisystems boasts that the plan is healthy because of the following: “low-glycemic index, good carbs, low saturated fats, zero trans fats, high fiber, high protein. 50% less sodium than the typical American diet, 70% less added sugar than the typical American diet, no saccharine or aspartame, no stimulants or appetite suppressants, no MSG (Nutrisystems, 1999).

Overall, the Nutrisystem diet plan earns the grade of a C. While it could be an improvement for some people who consume a diet high in fat, sugar, and sodium and low in vitamins and minerals, it is not a nutritiously sound plan since it requires vitamins and supplements for people to meet the Recommended Daily Allowance and includes empty calories daily (Nutrisystems, 1999). Vitamins and supplements are not a substitute for whole foods and most Americans can get their required micronutrients through food (Thompson, et al. 2012).

References

Agatston, A. (2013). *South beach diet* Retrieved from <http://www.southbeachdiet.com/diet/>. Everyday Health Inc.

(1999). *Nutrisystems*. Retrieved from http://www.nutrisystem.com/jsps_hmr/home/index.jsp

Thompson, J., Manore, M. (2012) *Nutrition: an applied approach*. San Francisco, CA. Pearson Education, Inc.