



2020-21 Nutrition Challenge: March South Beach Diet

Rose Patient, RN, Nutritionist

Are You Beach Body Ready?!

What a clever name for a diet! Positive images and hints at the potential beach vacation physique. I have to applaud the simplicity in which this diet is offered. I call it “*The Sensible Man Diet*” because it relies on 4 key rules:

- 1) **Moderate your calorie intake**
- 2) **Eliminate sugar**
- 3) **Reducing the level of saturated fat**
- 4) **Make your meals at home**

You're Safe!

If you ask any one person to follow these guidelines, their lipid profile will definitely improve and their risk for heart disease will lower. It is an ideal diet for someone who wants to lose weight but not make many changes to their basic food choices.



This is why there is so little creativity in the meals plans provided in the 2003 book. The good doctor does not challenge his clients to try new foods; in fact, he goes out of his way to help them adapt fast foods, restaurants and desserts to meet his guidelines. And this is exactly why his diet is popular and has endured for decades. Good for you, if you are looking to drop weight without too much hassle.

My Experience

I am happy to report that this was one of the easiest diets for me to follow.



Moderation: I have been averaging about 1500 calories/day for months now.



Sugar: Every diet in this challenge has reduced or completely eliminated sugar. I myself am not a sugar fiend. Seriously, the only added sugar for me is a teaspoon in my morning coffee. I rarely indulge in desserts. As for the sinister refined carbs that happily breakdown into simple sugars, like white bread and white rice – well, Paleo has cured me of those. This is no longer a struggle. Our household has not purchased a loaf of bread, bagels, rice or pasta for going on 3 months now.



Saturated Fats: This was the biggest area of improvement for me, and I can summarize it in one word: DAIRY. I do love cheese and yogurt, and yes, milk. When this diet asked me to make low-fat substitutions, dairy became more of a condiment for me instead of a food group.



Homemade Meals: No problem here again. I love the calm and peace that I feel when I am working in my kitchen. Ohm.



There Are Now Several Versions of the SBD

I followed the 2003 edition – which claimed to be first and foremost concerned with improving cardiac health, and then weight loss was second. It reads much like any other diet book. A good guy, wants answers, finds some truth and then markets it as a panacea. The cover of the book: “Lose belly fat first.” On page 3: “The South Beach Diet is not low-carb. Nor is it low-fat.” STOP IT! You don’t lose belly fat first. Yes, it IS low-carb. And at the end, he gives reasons why you may not succeed on the diet, all - surprise, surprise – not your fault. It’s the situation. ☹️

Why I am not thunderstruck by this diet

The author, Dr. Agatston, is a cardiologist, and uses his authority to strengthen his position on nutrition. However, it is well known that medical schools do not spend their time on nutritional interventions, and medical students rarely get more than a few hours devoted to the power of food.

The manner in which this book is written is folksy at best, and deliberately dumbed down. “I don’t want to burden you with medical terminology...” He dwells upon the glycemic index as if that is the only medical science the average reader is capable of. Never mind that most foods are eaten in combination, making the glycemic load irrelevant as a prioritized guideline.

Speaking from the point of view of a nutritionist who spent 3 years studying and completing a nutrition degree, plus a 4-year degree in nursing where we had entire classes on nutrition - his lack of knowledge in this area is very apparent. For example, he advocates artificial sweeteners. *And I Can’t Believe It’s Not Butter!* And seems to be in a bit of a quandary when looking for white potato substitutes. What about sweet potatoes? Squash? Whole grains? The absence of green leafy salads is heart-breaking (pun intended).  

What is good about the ORIGINAL South Beach Diet ?

It will not harm you. It doesn’t eliminate entire food groups like the VEGAN diet. If you go VEGAN, you need to study, practice, assess your nutritional intake, and take supplements. Here, the SBD is a plug in and go diet.

You don’t need special workarounds, like the fat-bombs of KETO, which allow you to shift your macros in an unnatural direction. So, despite my criticisms, it can certainly function as a weight loss strategy that embraces calorie intake as the determinant for weight loss. (There are others that look at body type and hormones)

Target Audience

The target audience for this diet is the average American, eating the Standard American Diet (SAD). You know, the one loaded with meat and dairy and bread, with a few vegetables to make you feel like you're healthy. The SBD guidelines moves you away from this. Currently, the standard American's BMI is 29.0 for both men and women (CDC, 2018). Which is at the top end of the 'overweight' category.

→Avg Male 5'9" @ 198 lb →Avg Female 5'4" @ 170 lb

? So, what would it take to be considered '**obese**'?

A 5-pound weight gain. That's Thanksgiving.

? So, what would it take to be considered '**normal**'?

The SAD female needs to lose 24 pounds

The SAD male needs to lose 29 pounds

(To calculate your own BMI, go to:

https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.html)

Exercise Considerations

If you want to get started on losing weight, but don't know where to start, then the original SBD is for you. It's not perfect, but it's a good start. But I also strongly recommend that you exercise 3 x wk. Why?

1. It will strengthen your heart
2. It will improve your blood flow
3. It will help drop your blood pressure
4. It will improve your lung capacity
5. It will improve your sleep

All **5** of these will have a beneficial impact on your heart. I believe Dr. Agatston would agree.

Nutritional Assessment of The South Beach Diet

Every diet that I have studied has nutritional shortcomings.

Every one.

I continue to encourage my readers to track their food on www.cronometer.com

Do this for at least 7 days, ideally 2 weeks. This will open your eyes to the gaps in your diet. It is also designed to help you identify foods that are rich in that nutrient, so then you can modify your meals and reassess. I am not paid to promote their tool, I just love to share good information.

Now, here is where the SBD feel short according to my data:

Macros: (Protein, Carbs & Fat)

PRO: 79% a bit low, but not terrible

CHO: 57% Too low. This reflects the lack of vegetable variety of the meals.

FAT: 128% High, but okay for me because the emphasis was monounsaturated fats like avocado and olive oil. My saturated fat intake was 29gms per day.

There is no RDA for saturated fat, but they recommend to restrict it to 10% of your daily calories. For a 2000 calorie diet, that is 22gms/day. Wow, 29gms looks very high given that suggestion. BUT I looked back on all my monthly summaries (an excel spreadsheet) and 29gms is actually not terrible. Most of the diets I followed (except for the meat based ones) dramatically reduce saturated fats. For most months, my saturated fat intake ranged from 22-30. The probiotic rich and PALEO were both in the 40's. The lowest was WW at 19 and that was only because I was in a severe calorie deficit. VEGAN? 23.



I find this all very intriguing. (That makes me a Nutrition Nerd) I DID lose 4 pounds. Was the diet the reason? Maybe, but I have increased my running from 30 minutes to an hour, 3 times a week. (1800 extra calories burned/week = 7200 calories/month divide by 3500cal/lb = 2.06 pound weight loss by the numbers). My calorie intake is at a weight loss rate of 2 lb/month. Therefore, I don't think it was the diet that helped me lose weight, **it was the combination of sensible caloric intake + exercise.** 🤪

SHIFT: The emphasis on low-fat dairy helped me to view dairy in a completely different way. I now consider dairy to be more of a condiment or flavor enhancer. For example, sprinkle grated parmesan cheese on tomato soup as a garnish. Splash a bit in your coffee, and that is where it should stay.

Other SBD Nutrition Gaps:

Calcium: 62% Of course, every diet struggles with calcium.

Vit D: 24% Ditto

Vit E: 49%

B1: 79%

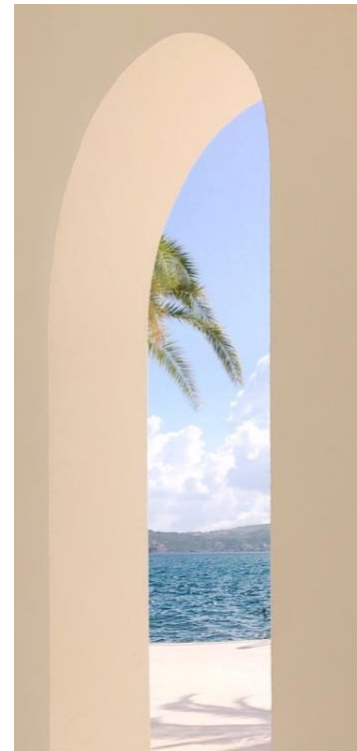
A whole-food multivitamin shores up these gaps easily. A high quality calcium supplement is in order. Which brings me to another frustration that I had in reading this book. Dr. Agatston recommends daily aspirin and a cholesterol reducing medication. He trivializes nutritional supplements citing the lack of good research data. But, taking Plavix and aspirin are okay and good. Sigh. And he then follows this with saying that yes, you should exercise, but it's the nutritional aspect of this diet that is of primary importance.

If you want to blindly follow nutritional advice from a person because they went to medical school, I can't stop you. I think that you would be much better served to consider this: **Humans are complex and need wholistic solutions, not just a glycemic index and some aspirin.**

Meta-Analysis: Coming of Age

Nutritional science is now entering an exciting phase. We now have enough data from years of studying nutrition, to come to meaningful conclusions. You want information? Go to Google Scholar which will help you find these meta-analysis findings and think for yourself. There are also many wholistic practitioners out there who are also paying attention and will support you in your quest for health.

🗨 Instead of suffering the ping-pong media drama, ‘eat this, not that’ – we can now feel strength in meta-analysis. These are studies that consider all the work that has been done to see the overall impact of a topic. For example, are saturated fats bad for you? Some studies say yes, other studies say no – BUT most of the studies say they are bad in large quantities. Eggs are another great example. They used to be ‘incredible, edible’ and then were vilified for the cholesterol yolk that was sure to kill you. Now we are soundly back to the conclusion that they have a beneficial place in the diet. ✓



The NEW SBD is KETO friendly and available by Mail

This is my final quarrel with the SBD. It has morphed into fast food. Order online; everything comes in a box. AND they offer the meal-replacement shake. Ugh. I believe that true lasting weight loss is based on learning how to feed yourself properly. I sincerely feel that you need to cultivate a healthy relationship with food. Absolving yourself of this responsibility by ordering food online will not work long term. Yes, the average American is quite overweight, and they have a considerable amount of work to do in order to meet the healthy BMI ranges. But it can't be done while looking outside of yourself or for someone to fix it for you. I suggest the best starting point is with a nutritionist. Learn from them. They are fountains of knowledge. Contact me: Rose@PatientTherapies.com

Original SBD Hacks?

- To reduce saturated fats, first reduce dairy, then red meat
- During the first 2 weeks, when you purge your diet of simple sugars etc, take a fiber supplement so you GI doesn't suffer. - Love Metamucil
- If you want 'KETO friendly' then go to the KETO diet
- Eat close to the earth.

SBD Recipes? There are many in his book – very plain flavors, so be willing to add a splash of hot sauce! Or use olive oil and a clove of crushed garlic for flavor!

Thankful

These last 11 Diet Tests have been a journey of love for me. I know how confusing diet and nutrition can be and I wanted to give my readers a taste of reality. Popular diets are typically fads and not worth the long-haul. You need to learn to love good natural food. Yep. It's boring, but that's the foundational basis of superior health. I have one month left. I am using it to explore a diet and a fasting regimen called...



ANNOUNCEMENT!

April 2021 is

The Daniel Plan