

## Royal connection drives interest in Dukan diet

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The French are at it again. Telling the rest of the world how to be as thin as they are, this time with a book called *The Dukan Diet*, written by a French physician.

The book has sold 10 million copies worldwide, but didn't really make an impression on North America until Carole Middleton — whose daughter Kate is set to marry Prince William on April 29 — told a British news reporter in October that she was using it to shed weight.

Dr. Pierre Dukan sent her an autographed copy of his book.

Mention of the diet has also been linked to Kate Middleton, Jennifer Lopez and Gisele Bündchen. Except for Carole Middleton, the media claims seem unsubstantiated. Bündchen's spokesperson has said she's not on it.

Still, the rumours persist, driving interest in *The Dukan Diet* book, which goes on sale in Canada on April 19 for \$29.95 with the subtitle *The Real Reason the French Stay Thin*.

Dukan is flattered by the attention his diet has been getting in the media as a result of its connection to the royal family.

His diet is based on the premise that big eaters can't ration their food, and people who want to lose weight need a fast-acting diet that brings immediate results — fast enough to help them maintain motivation.

"It's efficient, it's simple, there's no hunger," says Dukan. "It's a low-frustration diet."

Dukan's diet is similar in many ways to the Atkins diet, even he agrees. But Dukan dieters don't have to calculate carbohydrates.

For the first 10 days, depending on how much weight they want to lose, Dukan dieters can eat as much lean protein as they want, but nothing else. Dukan calls this the Attack Stage.

Atkins allows fat during the first stage of dieting. Dukan dieters can only eat lean protein that is cooked — grilled preferably — without butter or oil.

They must also drink 1.5 litres of water, consume 1.5 tablespoons of oat bran and walk 20 minutes each day.

This is followed by what Dukan calls the Cruise Phase, which adds non-starchy vegetables to the mix every second day. Potatoes, corn, peas, beans, lentils, avocados and grains remain verboten.

Once dieters arrive at what Dukan calls their "True Weight," which is based on factors including age, height and heredity, the "Consolidation Phase" begins.



Dr. Pierre Dukan, author of *The Dukan Diet*.  
CARADINE-MARY ERHYARDY

One serving of fruit per day is added to the mix, and two slices of whole grain bread, one serving of cheese a day and two servings of starchy foods, such as pasta. Dieters must continue to eat only lean protein one day a week.

In the Permanent Stabilization Phase, dieters can eat what they want for six days out of seven, but Thursday is a day of lean proteins only — for life.

Dukan said he arbitrarily chose Thursday because unless a specific day is selected, people tend to forget to do it.

To maintain the weight loss, dieters must also consume three tablespoons of oat bran a day and swear off elevators and escalators — which is easier in lowrise Paris than it is in highrise Toronto.

France's governmental National Agency for Food, Environmental and Work Health Safety has identified the diet as one of 15 imbalanced and potentially risky diets. The British Dietetic Association called it one of the five worst diets of 2011.

Dukan dismisses such criticisms. All diets are unbalanced, he points out. That's how you lose weight. Any nutrient deficiencies caused by the diet would be temporary, he says.

Health Canada has no specific position on the Dukan diet, but it recommends contacting a health care professional or a dietitian before starting any special diet.

Denis Collier, a registered dietitian with a practice in Toronto, says eating a balanced diet from all the main food groups and getting a lot of exercise are the keys to losing weight.

"It's recycled stuff," he says of Dukan's recipe for weight loss, pointing out that Atkins made a similar splash with a similar emphasis on proteins.

According to figures from the Canadian Obesity Network, an estimated 59 per cent of Canadian adults and 26 per cent of children and adolescents are overweight or obese. One in 10 premature deaths among Canadian adults aged 20 to 64 years is directly attributable to overweight and obesity.

People contemplating a diet always want to know how much weight they will lose and how long it will take, says Dr. Arya Sharma, obesity chair at the University of Alberta and director of the Canadian Obesity Network.

"The question to ask is 'What are the chances of me keeping the weight off if I enter your program,'" he says.

Diets only address symptoms, says Sharma. The real problem could be emotionally eating, or simply time management. A single working mom may not have time to buy fresh produce and spend 40 minutes each night cooking.

Other people can't afford to buy fresh foods and rely on fast food because it is inexpensive.