

Willpower key to Dukan Diet

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The Dukan Diet is the latest craze to take the nutrition world by storm.

Created by nutritionist Dr. Pierre Dukan, the diet became popular in France more than 10 years ago, and it is now quickly gaining popularity throughout the rest of Europe and the United States as well.

In fact, stars ranging from Jennifer Lopez to Jessica Szohr are purported to owe their sleek and sexy bodies to this diet.

Let's consider the diet's basic tenets:

A strict start. The first step on the Dukan Diet is called the attack phase. During the attack phase, dieters must abstain from everything except lean protein (think eggs, fish, and meat) and non-fat dairy. Alcohol is a no-no, but you still can get your caffeine fix with coffee and tea.

Dieters will likely see similarities between the attack phase and other induction phases on low-carb diets such as Atkins. However, Dukan cautions that this isn't a high-fat diet. In fact, dieters are prohibited Atkins-standbys like butter and oil. In addition, dieters are encouraged to eat a tablespoon of oat bran each day, which is believed to help ward off carb cravings and promote optimal fat loss.

During this stage, dieters can expect to lose anywhere from 10 pounds or more, depending on how long they choose to remain in this stage. (The more weight you have to lose, the longer you are advised to stay in attack mode).

Cruising into weight loss. The next step is the cruise phase. During this stage, dieters can begin to add in previously prohibited vegetables in an unlimited amount, but only every other day. In other words, after one day of nothing but protein, the next day is protein and veggies. Weight loss will slow down on this phase of the diet, but dieters are still expected to lose around 2 pounds or more each week, staying in this phase until they reach their weight-loss goal.

Consolidating your assets. After your weight loss goals are attained, the Dukan Diet now moves into the maintenance portion, known as the consolidation phase.

In this phase, dieters can slowly begin to add in their favorite foods including carbohydrates such as potatoes. They also are cautioned to eat a largely protein- and veggie-heavy diet, along with daily servings of fruit and whole wheat bread. They are even permitted two celebration meals a week in which they can indulge in whatever — everything from butter to pasta to alcohol.

In this phase, dieters won't lose weight, but they aren't expected to gain it either.

After the consolidation phase, the stabilization phase begins. Like the consolidation phase, no foods are off-limits but dieters still practice healthy eating and moderation. For one day each week, dieters eat protein-only meals.

So what's the verdict? As far as diets go, the Dukan Diet is a reasonable program in which dieters are rewarded for their hard work and permitted occasional indulgences. And, if you have the willpower to make it through these first stages, the Dukan Diet is a good way to lose weight and keep it off. This is not a surprise as it is based on the well-known nutritional fact: Healthy eating plus exercise equals weight loss.

For healthy living, there are many great food choices, but it all comes down to eating right, and reducing or eliminating junk food. It's all about making lifestyle changes that work for you in the long-term.

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