

American Dietetic Association Book Review:

Diet for a Pain-Free Life: A Revolutionary Plan to Lose Weight, End Inflammation, Stop Pain, Sleep Better and Feel Great in 21 Days (www.ipainfreediet.com)

By Harris H. McIlwain, MD, and Debra Fulghum Bruce, PhD

Marlowe & Company 2007

Reviewer: David W. Grotto, RD, LDN

Claims:

Feel great in 21 days, lose weight and stop pain. Just losing ten pounds, regardless of what you weigh, can reduce pain.

Diet Plan:

Obesity = inflammation = pain is the cornerstone of this book by a renowned pain specialist who contends chemicals called cytokines and prostaglandins, among other inflammatory markers, are responsible for pain. He asserts these chemicals are driven by obesity and dietary choices which can fuel inflammation. He proposes four prescriptions to end pain: exercise, stress management, improved sleep and eating well and losing weight.

The diet is plant-based, free of most animal protein except poultry, fish, eggs and low-fat dairy products. Meals consist of one-fourth protein, one-fourth whole-grain products, one fourth low-starch vegetables and one-fourth fruits.

The first two-week phase restricts animal proteins to only fish and eggs and eliminates white sugar, potatoes and white flour products. It also includes an array of antioxidant-rich fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products. No alcohol is allowed. This phase averages 1,400 calories a day.

The second phase, also 1,400 calories, permits a glass of red wine (if desired) and dessert. It offers a greater variety of foods including beans and soy proteins and includes several tasty recipes. The author suggests staying on this phase until you are within five to 10 pounds of your goal weight.

Third phase is called Lifetime. It includes poultry, if desired. To decrease inflammation and live pain-free, the author advises foregoing meat (particularly beef, lamb and pork). He also recommends some may need to stay away from nightshade vegetables (tomatoes, potatoes, eggplant and peppers) that contain the phytochemical solanine which may cause pain. He also suggests white potatoes, corn and other starchy carbohydrates and sugars should be avoided because they are known to cause surges of insulin which increases the risk of obesity and pro-inflammatory chemicals.

The book includes a dietary plan for all three phases, recipes, handy charts and a list of dietary supplement and herbs for fighting pain.

Nutritional Pros/Cons:

Pro: All three phases are nutritionally sound, though this program may not appeal to meat-and-potato types. There are several tasty recipes and even an element of fun with the inclusion of items like wine and desserts.

Though it is calorie controlled, the 1,400-calorie-fits-all meal plan is certainly not tailored to all body sizes. The science behind avoiding white potatoes because they elicit drastic insulin surges thus spurring on inflammation is rather weak, especially in context of consuming potatoes as part of the balanced dietary program that is proposed.

Bottom Line:

This dietary plan offers sound nutritional advice that is do-able and delicious and could potentially be a godsend to millions of pain sufferers.