

MEDProf's Overnight Diet: "Fast, Permanent" Weight Loss

As director of the Nutrition & Weight Management Center at Boston Medical Center, Caroline Apovian is immersed in the science of dieting and weight management. Now the School of Medicine professor of medicine and pediatrics has written *The Overnight Diet: The Proven Plan for Fast, Permanent Weight Loss* (Grand Central Life & Style, 2013), with Frances Sharpe, advocating for a high-protein, vegetable-rich, "fat-burning" diet that she says can help people lose as many as nine pounds in the first week. *BOSTONIA* asked Apovian about what makes this diet different, why protein is so important, and whether it's really possible to lose weight while sleeping.

BOSTONIA: How is this diet unlike others?

APOVIAN: This diet combines two approaches for weight loss and does not eliminate any foods. The one-day power-up is based on intermittent fasting and is translated into a day of drinking calories in the form of smoothies, which combine protein and fruits and vegetables; the second method is a protein-rich program to

build muscle mass and prevent the shrinking muscle syndrome, plus stay full all day.

How does the diet reflect your research and clinical work in the obesity field?

We have realized that as you get older, you need more protein, not less—the body loses one

percent muscle mass per year after the age of 30. As you lose muscle, your metabolic rate decreases and you cannot eat as much as you used to—therefore you gain weight.

The plan is being described as "losing weight while you sleep." Is that accurate?

You need eight hours of sleep per night. If you do not get that, the gut hormones, which produce hunger, are secreted in higher quantities, and you

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE PROFESSOR
Caroline Apovian says getting eight hours of sleep per night keeps hunger at bay.

COURTESY OF CAROLINE APOVIAN

New book's protein-rich program designed to build muscle

become ravenous. *But* you can lose two pounds overnight on the power-up first day of the diet. It is mainly water and salt, but you still feel great the next day, and revved up for the rest of the week.

Explain the "one-day power-up."

The power-up day consists of three delicious smoothies and you drink those calories—they fill you up and you get enough protein to feed your muscles. The rest of the week you are on the six-day fuel-up with protein, fruits, veggies, and lean carbs.

How important a component of this diet is exercise?

All you need to build muscle and create afterburn, which means your metabolism stays up long after you stop exercising, is 21 minutes, 4 days per week. The exercises are short bursts of workload and keep your metabolism revved up.

What causes the initial loss of so-called water weight?

As you eat less carbohydrates and sugars, less insulin is produced by the

pancreas. Insulin causes salt and water retention, so less insulin means you excrete all that water and salt.

When you reach your goal weight, what is involved in maintaining it?

Keep on the same plan of one-day power-up and six-day fuel-up and you will keep the weight off. No foods are off-limits.

The diet was criticized by Yale's David Katz as being "unrealistic," another fad diet. How do you respond to its dismissal as a fad or as a repackaging of existing diets?

Fad? I don't think so. This diet was created from the results of scientific research in preventing muscle loss while eating fruits and vegetables to prevent cancer or heart disease. It was created based on the Protein Sparing Modified Fast (PSMF), which was developed in the 1970s and proven to spare lean muscle mass if given to patients who are critically ill in ICU settings. I added fruits and vegetables to PSMF and created a plan that anyone can do in daily life.

SUSAN SELIGSON

WEB EXTRA

Through July, Caroline Apovian will take your questions about nutrition and her new book, *The Overnight Diet*, at bu.edu/bostonia.