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Critique of a Popular Diet Book

Title: The Paleo Solution: The Original Human Diet

Author: Robb Wolf

Credentials:

- Winner of the Natural Athletes Strength Association California State Power Lifting Championship at the age of 19.
- USAW Olympic Weightlifting coach.
- Earned a BS in Biochemistry from California State University, Chico and worked as a research biochemist for 5 years (included lipid metabolism research at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center)
- Review editor for the Journal of Nutrition and Metabolism.
- Co-owner and coach at Norcal Strength and Conditioning in Chico, CA

Rationale/claims:

- According to the author, this diet works because it is the diet of our hunter-gatherer forebears. He argues that they were healthy and more energetic than the human population is today. It works because human and prehuman ancestors lived for 3 million years with remarkable high levels of health, eating only lean meats, seafood, nuts, seeds, fruits, and vegetables (Wolf 19). It is when the agricultural revolution occurred that we started cultivating grains and legumes making us small, weak, and sick. Some claims that Wolf makes are that eating this grain free diet is easier to break down and if we keep it from our diet we can stay healthy, lose fat, look younger, feel great, and avoid cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. He worked with Loren Cordain PHD in research who is the world's leading expert in the topic of ancestral diet as it relates to our health and wellness.

1 Day of Paleo Diet Example

Breakfast:

- Hardboiled egg
- Crushed walnuts over ½ Cup of berries

Lunch:

- Tuna and Cabbage Salad

Snack:

- Almond butter on celery sticks

Dinner:

- Grilled Salmon 1 lb

Is it well rounded and sustainable?

The ability of an individual to follow this diet depends entirely on their usual eating habits, as well as their usually income. Overall, I would say the majority of the American population would have great difficulty in following this diet long-term. The United States is full of many different cultures. All of these cultures have legumes, starches and/or grains as staples in their usual diet. These staple foods are a major part of a person's life, and typically cannot be easily given up. Cutting sugars and processed foods out of the typical American diet would be a huge culture shock on the average citizen, adding legumes, starches, grains and dairy to the mix would be unimaginable for even the most health conscience individual. Also, while sugars and processed foods provide hardly any nutrients, other than calories, the rest of these foods on the taboo list can provide a variety of vitamins and minerals, as well as fiber and other beneficial substances. Another factor to consider is how expensive this diet would be. The average person cannot afford to buy all organic products, or eat as much meat or as many nuts as this diet prescribes. Organic olive oil is also incredibly expensive, as are avocados. These are all the staples of this diet, other than fruits and vegetables, which seem to be the only foods the average person can afford in abundance.

There is no mention of goal weights in this book; the author is mostly focused on the health and well being of the individual. All three aspects of weight loss are addressed. Diet, of course, is the main point discussed. Second in line is the topic of exercise. According to the author, Robb Wolf, if you do not exercise, you are a broken person (Wolf, p145). One chapter, out of thirteen, is devoted to the importance of exercise and how this importance dates back to the active lifestyles of our ancestors. It addresses how exercise affects our body chemistry, as

well as the importance of strength training, endurance, and flexibility. Behavior modification is addressed throughout the book; focusing on improved sleeping patterns, mindful grocery shopping, and taking time out of the day to make home cooked meals.

Critical Comments:

- 2,385kcal/day: Adequate for average person
- It will NOT avoid feelings of deprivation
- Will avoid feelings of hunger
- Enough protein/CHO is present to prevent ketosis
- Easy to follow
- Palatability would be dependent on individual food preferences
- Not balanced
- Lower CHO than recommended, barely nutritionally adequate
- Costs more \$\$ than average diet

Overall conclusion:

This diet expects the individual to make drastic changes in a short amount of time. The book does teach about meal planning, recipe modification, and even goes into how different foods react in the body, but fails to address learning skills such as food labeling. I would not recommend this diet. It focuses on eating a prescription and sticking to strict guidelines when choosing foods. The author labels certain foods as “bad” and demands these foods to be completely eliminated from the diet, even foods that are known to have nutritional value. Overall I would say there is no great cause for concern and if an individual can sustain this limited diet then long-term weight loss is possible.