

Diet Book Critique - The Step Diet

Title:

The book is titled The Step Diet, written by James Hill, John Peters, and Bonnie Jortberg. James Hill and John Peters both have PH.D.s and Bonnie Jortberg has a M.S. and is a R.D. Two of the authors have PH.Ds and one has a M.S. and is a registered dietitian, therefore their credentials are outstanding for recommending a diet.

Hill, Jortberg and John Peters. The Step Diet. New York: Workman Publishing, 2004.

Rationale/Claim:

The main idea for this diet is to make lifestyle changes, such as walking every day, in order to lose weight and keep it off. This alternative weight loss system focuses on exercise other than primarily monitoring ones food intake. To lose weight successfully, you need to reduce the energy you take in relation to the energy your body burns through resting metabolism and physical activity. Step Diet does not focus just on counting calories, it focuses on energy balance and portion control. Steps can me easily measured with the step counter that comes with the Step Diet book. This way you keep track of the total energy your body burns by the amount of steps you take every day. Also, the book converts calories in foods into steps. It claims you need to monitor energy balance in steps, how much you have eaten in steps vs. how much energy your body burns in steps.

This book explains the science about calorie needs changing as you lose weight, metabolism goes down because your body is smaller and requires less energy. When you lose

weight, you have to eat fewer calories than before you lost the weight. Therefore you have to eat less forever, or take more steps daily. Step diet claims to work for long term weight management because it shows how to increase the number of steps you take each day to compensate for the drop in metabolism as you lose weight. So as your metabolism goes down, you have to take more steps each day so that the total energy body is burning compensates for the intake. The book claims that you will be able to eat more food than you did before the diet because total energy expenditure is higher and gives you a real chance to keep the weight off forever.

5 Principles of the Step Diet:

- 1) Maintain the proper energy balance
- 2) Small changes drive success
- 3) Start with physical activity
- 4) Anticipate success, but not instantly
- 5) The maintenance of weight loss is more important than the speed or amount of weight loss

6 Stages of weight control

- 1) Seven days-prepare for permanent weight management
- 2) Two weeks. Stop gaining weight
- 3) Time it takes to reach Ch. 4. Set your personal weight-management goals
- 4) Twelve weeks max. Make small changes to lose weight
- 5) Four weeks min. Find your personal energy balance point
- 6) As long as it takes. Plan for lifelong success.

The rationale of this diet is exactly what I have learned in nutrition classes and is supported by scientific evidence. Based on scientific research, the way to lose weight is to burn more calories than taken in each day, and this is what the book is informing the readers to do. Also, the book explains that you burn calories without moving by explaining your resting metabolic rate (and explains how you calculate yours) and the thermic effect of food (that you burn calories by digesting food, however it is only 10% of total energy you take in).

Overview of diet:

This diet doesn't give any specific daily kcal, protein, fat or carbohydrate intakes. It simply states that you need to walk enough steps per day to compensate for everything that you have consumed. Therefore I can not analyze 1-2 day menu or determine the kcals, % from protein, fat or carbohydrates. You are to count calories of your daily intake in order to find out how many steps to take to compensate for this to achieve more steps taken than you consume, and recommends that you only eat 75% of what you had been eating before. Depending on one's height and weight, a certain number of calories equal a certain number of steps. For example, a 5'6" man who weighs 175 lbs, one calorie equals 20 steps. Specific foods are given steps per calorie of the food. For example, an omelet with cheese, for one serving size is five steps per calorie. So, if the omelet is 150 calories total, this accounts for 750 steps.

The book does comment about carbohydrates and fats and how they are important in the diet. It describes that there are no such things as bad fats. But changing the main types of fat that you consume will improve your overall health by improving lipid profile. However, changing the types of fat consumed will not affect energy balance or weight balance, and no matter what fats provide 9 calories per gram consumed. Also, just like there are no bad fats, there are no bad carbohydrates. The book states that trying to avoid all carbohydrates to lose weight is not a good

strategy since they are important sources of key nutrients in the body. They just suggest that you consume your carbohydrates from fruits, vegetables and whole grains instead of refined carbohydrates.

Is it well-rounded and sustainable?

Yes, this diet is well rounded and sustainable. It includes diet and exercise, explaining that less than 10 percent of weight loss with diet alone works, less than 5 percent with exercise alone actually works, so you need to be aware of both. Once the client reaches a goal weight, the long-term maintenance is addressed. As described in the book's rationale, once one loses weight their metabolism is also slower. Therefore this book explains that when you lose weight, you also need to lower your calorie intake or take more steps daily.

Behavior modification and exercise are the main components of this diet. Having enough steps per day is the basis of the diet. Burning more calories by walking than you take is how this diet works. Also, there are alternatives to walking that they explain and give calculations on how to count the steps taken if you can't wear the pedometer (such as canoeing=60steps/minute). Since diet and exercise are emphasized, and starvation is shunned on, this makes for a well-rounded diet.

However well rounded and scientific based this diet is, this could lead to disordered eating. How could one count their calories each day, convert them into steps and then make sure that they "step off" as much as they have taken in. This could lead to obsessive calorie counting, and possible anorexia or other disordered eating. I feel that one should not obsess in how much they take in each day, it could cause stress and perpetuate their weight problem. I would not recommend this book for someone to take literally, however I would recommend it in order for

them to understand the idea of balancing kcals in versus kcals out and the scientific explanations about metabolism.

Critical Comments:

- There aren't calorie restrictions in this diet, except to burn more calories per day than are taken in. Therefore caloric intake should be adequate for anyone following the diet, especially since they emphasize the importance of consuming your estimated caloric intake from the BEE equation.
- Feelings of deprivation and hunger are avoided since limiting daily intake of food is not suggested.
- The book states that there are no such thing as bad carbohydrates and that they are necessary in the diet for major body functions, therefore it is most likely that those who follow this diet do not consume enough.
- Protein is encouraged in a lean form; therefore protein consumption is most likely adequate.
- Protein and carbohydrates that are provided are most likely to prevent ketosis since there is not limitation on the intake.
- This diet appears to be nutritionally adequate, balanced, varied and easy to follow.
- Cost of this diet is the same as one would pay regularly for food.

Overall Conclusion:

Overall I would say that this diet is a sound diet, but I would not take it literally or follow it exactly. The main point of the diet is to have a higher energy output than energy input-which is exactly how to lose weight. The main principles of the diet are sound, as well as the main stages that include long term lifelong maintenance. Also, this diet does not have any restrictions of

foods to eat or claim that any food is bad as long as it is in moderation. It may become a hassle to count calories every day and measure the steps that each food accounts for. By doing this one is going to begin to obsess in everything that they consume and make sure that they are in a balance. This diet is not safe and implies that obsessing over every item consumed is an ok thing to do.

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