

Dr. Goldman's Book Reviews

THE SOUTHBEACH DIET

The Delicious Doctor-Designed, Foolproof Plan for Fast
and Healthy Weight Loss

By

Arthur Agatston, M.D.

St. Martin's Press, Rodale Publishers 2003

First, a word about Dr. Agatston:

Arthur Agatston, M.D. is a famous cardiologist. He has been working in Miami for many years. He originated the use of the spiral CAT scan to measure calcium deposits in the coronary arteries of the heart. He was then able to estimate the level of arteriosclerosis in those arteries. He was invited to Northside Hospital to speak on his research in Cardiology. Between the time of that invitation and his visit to Atlanta, *The Southbeach Diet* was published and rapidly became a best seller. The subject of his talk was changed to his new diet plan. I had read his book, been on his diet and was recommending it to my patients, when he came to Northside. The morning of his visit, I had the opportunity to spend a half hour with him, one-on-one.

For many years The American College of Cardiology has recommended a diet very low in fat and cholesterol. This diet is, by default, very high in carbohydrates. Agatston noted that he and his patients were gaining weight, especially around the middle, and that their blood cholesterol levels were getting worse, not better. There was something wrong with the **Cardiology Association diet**. He worked with dietitians and read many of the popular diet books of the time. He realized that high carbohydrate intake was the main problem. But the **Atkins diet**, the original low carbohydrate diet, was too high in fats and did not discriminate between healthy and unhealthy fats. The solution was a diet low in carbohydrates with substantial protein and modest fat content.

I view this book as an education guide to healthy eating habits. The first chapters discussing carbohydrate, fat and protein metabolism are the most important. I don't think that the severe first two weeks of his program are necessary. **I am not interested in the quick loss of a few pounds. Most important is knowledge of healthy eating habits, FOR LIFE.** Other books also provide a guide. I have not studied the Zone Diet but I understand that it is similar. The **Weight Watchers** diet plan is also balanced with reduced carbohydrates. It is a good alternative to Southbeach. The **Atkins Diet** is too low in carbohydrates and is too unpleasant to be maintained for long periods of time. I recently had a patient who objected to reading any books on diet. She wanted to just go to **Jenny Craig** and get the pre-prepared foods. I explained that she didn't need a "diet". She needed a change in life style. **It is all about eating well for long life and health.**

Robert P. Goldman, M.D.