

“Plain vanilla” 5:2 (aka Fast Diet)

There are a lot of clarifications, but here’s the basic 5:2:

- On 2 days a week (non-consecutive), eat limited calories (500 for women, 600 for men).
- On the other 5 days, eat “normally.” This does not mean cram excessive food in your face, or permission to eat “all you want.” It does mean there are no “forbidden” foods. You should strive to keep within your TDEE (total daily energy expenditure); note that you should NOT consistently eat less than that on normal days, to avoid triggering the dreaded famine reaction (reduction of your metabolism, leading to difficulty losing and possibly excessive compulsive hunger).
- That’s really it, the rest is all advice based on personal experience. The best thing about 5:2 is its flexibility.

Good advice

- Eat real food, on both fast and normal days. Don’t use protein drinks, powders, or bars; make yourself a salad, eat an apple...You’ll get much fuller and it’s healthier.
- Keep up with your usual caffeine intake, unless you want a headache!
- Plain green or white tea (or herbal) can be drunk in lieu of water...but lots of water is a good thing too; just don’t get too far from a bathroom!
- You can eat as simply or as complicated as you choose. You can mix it up; some days, a little Greek yogurt with fresh fruit; another day, an actual recipe!
- For fast days, better to avoid: Bread, rice, pasta, noodles, alcohol, diet soda, caloric beverages, high-carb veggies such as corn...
- DO drinks: plain tea and coffee, water, seltzer water with lemon...note that any sweetener or whitener in your coffee or tea counts as calories!
- For fast days: Lemon is your friend (if you like it); so is sauerkraut (raw, the good kind)—very low in calories, helps with gut bacteria/digestion; low calorie/high density veggies such as broccoli...
- For “stir fries”: use cooking spray and broth (veggie, or fat free if meat-based).
- For fast days: Watch the fat added for cooking, but consciously consumed fat can be a very good thing. For example, I add a tiny blob of coconut oil to my veggie broth (for my afternoon drink); adds only about 5 cals but dramatically increases satiety.
- You’ll probably have a few go-to meals after awhile, but you might want to change it up so you don’t get bored...like using slightly different veggies, or seasonings.
- Clear soup is good; in fact, you can simply add extra broth to make your “stir fry” a soup. In a pinch, when you are really “hangry” and just can’t wait, keep a few low-calorie canned soups around. NO BREAD! (or crackers)
- Eggs can be a good option, even for fast days. I particularly like poached or hard boiled.
- Salads are great...but watch the dressing! Especially be cautious about low-cal dressings, which often replace oil with sugar, which can trigger cravings for many people. Read that label! I’ve found if I use Krazy Salt on juicy veggies like tomatoes and cucumbers I can use a lot less dressing.
- **#1 Tip: PLAN AHEAD!** The main way you can derail any day, but especially a light day, is to walk around without a plan and get blindsided by particularly strong hunger pangs...I’ve found that smell is my biggest trigger (pizza oven at the Farmer’s Market, oh my!). If you must “run around” on a light day, make sure you carry water and a “legal” consumable, such as an apple or some fat free UNSWEETENED Greek yogurt with low cal fruit (berries are good)—not the premade kinds, too high in sugar! If you MUST add sweetener, a tiny drizzle of agave is best; lower glycemic than most sugars and less likely to trigger an insulin release (and the hunger monster). You’ll find what works for you and may not need to do this later on, but early in the process it helps to know you have something with you, a bit of a security blanket.

What do I eat on a light day?

Obviously, if your schedule differs from mine, you'll adjust the hours. Plus, as a long-term faster, I can go a long time without eating; you'll need to experiment to find what works best for you. Keeping a journal (what you ate when, how it affected you etc) can be very helpful in helping you discover your best pattern.

Katlyne's usual pattern:

- Up at 8am
- Coffee, black
- Water/rhodiola
- Pot of green tea (10am ish)
- Water, water, water
- Maybe more tea (all hot beverages no sugar, black)

1pm ish: Glass of water with clear fiber

4pm ish: cup of veggie broth with tiny blob of coconut oil

?? 6-7pm if hungry after work (don't always do this), ONE of the following:

- small salad
- hardboiled egg
- ¼ cup of fat free Greek yogurt with low cal fruit (berries or peaches)

Dinner (9-11pm) (one of the following):

- "Stir fry" with lots of low carb veggies, especially broccoli, spinach, mushrooms, Beyond Meat Chickenless Strips, low cal marinade/seasonings (like TJ's Soy-Ginger) (I "stir fry" by spraying the pan, then using veggie broth).
- Large salad, mostly low carb veggies, protein source (chickenless strips and/or hardboiled egg), low cal dressing (careful not to use one with a lot of sugar).
- "Soup"—really a glorified stir fry with extra broth.

Before bed snack (optional): Natural frozen yogurt bar under 100cals

"Emergency" supplies

- Apple
- Low cal canned soup
- Low cal protein bars (though I usually don't eat these for reason detailed below)
- Hardboiled egg (w/Krazy Salt, of course!)
- Broth (veggie for me of course; meat if you like)

General Guidelines for LIGHT DAYS

Don't:

- Use sugar or other sweeteners unless you must. If you “must,” try agave, lower glycemic, less likely to trigger insulin/cravings.
- Eat high-carb dense items: Bread, pasta, noodles, potatoes...high glycemic, will trigger insulin response and the hungries... Plus, too calorie-dense (you don't get much stomach filler for the calories).
- Use protein powders or bars (the latter in a real pinch, but watch those calories!). The lowest calorie one whose ingredients are acceptable to me (Think Thin Lean, 150 cals) is just not very filling for 150 cals, I'm much better off with an apple, unsweetened yogurt/berries, or small salad.
- Dried fruit: High in sugar, too concentrated, triggers insulin.
- Beverages with calories.
- Beverages with artificial sweeteners.

Do's:

- Lean protein
- Healthy fats (fat attached to meat is OK, just make sure you account for the calories)
- Salads; watch the dressing...many low fat ones are high in sugar, don't do it! And MEASURE your dressing, not straight from the bottle. (I've found putting Krazy Salt on the juicy veggies helps me use less dressing.)
- Soup, mostly “homemade” (see above); the broth part fills you up.
- Low cal seasonings etc; for example, most salsa is low cal and perfect for adding both flavor and food value.
- Low-carb veggies: Broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, zucchini, cucumber, tomatoes
- Low-carb/cal fruit: Berries, peaches, apricots, etc
- Caffeine: Don't get a headache! But don't overdo it either...
- Push calories as late as possible—but don't be stupid or inflexible about it. After 10 or so fasts, you'll hit a rhythm and will recognize the difference between “Eh, I'm a little nibbly, it'll pass,” and “I REALLY need to eat NOW!”

Other thoughts

Remember, you are NOT “dieting” on normal days; you need to eat ENOUGH, or you'll end up in famine mode and eat for survival (that's what your body thinks). And you need to determine which foods you can't/shouldn't give up without feeling deprived and going off the reservation later...This is your new “Way of Life”; you will eat this way for the rest of your life...If you don't get it, read on the forum for all those who've stopped “fasting” and have regained.

Thoughts on 5:2

Why can't I just do a stricter diet to lose weight faster, then revert to 5:2 to maintain?

There isn't any reason you can't do this; but there are good ones why it might not work the way you want...

First of all, anyone who has lost and regained, especially multiple times, knows how it feels when you've lost significant weight (the actual amount depends on many factors, including how much you have to lose) and "suddenly" it seems that you are ravenous all the time! While it's still under debate, it seems that our bodies are programmed to stay at a stable state (homeostasis) and if that is threatened by dietary restriction and / or rapid weight loss, the body fights back, trying to regain what was lost (triggers an "I'm starving!" response).

We tend to blame ourselves for such backsliding, but since it's been shown that only a very few very dedicated and borderline obsessive individuals are able to successfully maintain such a loss, it seems that something else must be at work here.

So, if your body is likely to fight back following significant rapid weight loss (and we haven't even addressed the mental aspects!), perhaps planning to follow a regimen of intermittent fasting (aka 5:2) after losing weight is setting yourself up for failure. As those of us who've 5:2'd for awhile can attest, while it can get easier to observe "light" days as you learn what works for you (and get comfortable with the many faces of hunger), it's by no means "easy." And if you've undermined yourself by restrictive dieting and caused your body to go into famine mode, it's just not likely you will be able to successfully maintain with 5:2.

5:2 is meant to be a Way of Life (WOL), for life! Not a temporary diet that you suffer through and come out on the other side as a victorious skinny person!

Another issue that is still in the trial stage is that slower weight loss such as experienced during 5:2 has other effects...

- Gives your body a chance to reset its set point; there may be multiples of these if you have more than 50 pounds to lose. Many have noticed that they tend to plateau at weights they've held for periods of time over the years. The thought is, once their body resets to that (new/old) set point, they once again begin losing.
- Gives your skin and jiggle bits a chance to reabsorb, your body to tighten up.
- Gives you a chance to adjust to eating differently/less over a longer period of time. A smaller body means you can eat less food to maintain that weight (not to mention, lose more weight); if you don't adjust long-term, you won't be able to maintain that new lower weight.*

*This is one of the main reasons I think that many shouldn't be striving for a low BMI; if you must maintain by observing major dietary restrictions, how sustainable is that? In other words, don't seek to lose weight you can't keep off...

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- Click "Forums" on yellow ribbon at top of page.
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- To post on a particular thread, go to the bottom of any page (do not have to be on the last page) and click **Post a reply**.

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