

"Your fat is not your fault"

An interview with **JJ Virgin**, celebrity fitness expert and author of the groundbreaking new book, *The Virgin Diet*

Q: How did you originate this plan? What sets this program apart from others?

A: I have been working in health and wellness for 25 years, and I first discovered the correlation between food intolerance and weight gain when I was doing simple food sensitivity tests with doctors. We worked with patients who suffered with symptoms like joint pain, mind fog, fatigue and digestive problems. We found that patients were reacting negatively to the same basic foods, and, surprisingly, when we removed these foods from their diets, they not only felt better, the unexpected side effect was dramatic, rapid weight loss. What was even more shocking, the 7 foods most likely to cause food intolerance (or high-FI foods) were components of traditional weight-loss programs: gluten, soy, dairy, eggs, corn, peanuts, and artificial sweeteners and sugar. I regularly see people lose 7 pounds in the first 7 days simply by eliminating the foods that they actually thought were good for them.

Q: What makes your diet so unique/special?

A: *The Virgin Diet* stands apart because it pinpoints the true cause of weight gain and weight-loss resistance: food intolerance. So many diets focus on calories in, calories out. The problem with this model is that your body isn't a bank account—it's a chemistry lab. If the foods you're eating—even traditional "diet" foods like fat-free yogurt and egg-white omelets—are causing a negative reaction in your body, you're setting yourself to *gain* weight, not lose. By pulling the 7 high-FI foods, people lose weight fast—up to 7 pounds in the first 7 days. After 3 weeks, readers can actually test each food to identify their individual food intolerances

and create a long-term eating plan that works for their unique body chemistry. There's no deprivation, no hunger and (after the first few days of elimination) no troublesome cravings that are the downfall of other diet programs. So not only will my readers lose fat fast, they'll keep it off for good. And in addition to dramatic weight loss, *The Virgin Diet* reverses bloating, stomach problems, fatigue and a host of other health problems most people don't associate with their diet.

Q: *The Virgin Diet* is based on science, but also on your personal experiences working with thousands of clients. What is the core surprise you have discovered about the way many of us eat when trying to lose weight?

A: Surprisingly, the "diet" foods most people think are good for them are actually holding their health and their waistlines hostage. Low-fat yogurt, egg-white omelets, whole-grain bread, tofu, soy, and diet sodas are some of the worst foods to eat if you're trying to lose weight. Why? Because the science and my experience with thousands of clients have shown that most people develop intolerances to at least one of these foods. These food intolerances cause inflammation, leaky gut and bloating that ultimately cause us to *gain* weight and make it nearly impossible to lose it. That's right, those "diet" foods are to blame! Time and time again I've seen people eliminate these so-called diet foods for 3 weeks and lose up to 7 pounds in the first 7 days. Then, when they identify which faux health foods are hurting them and stay away from *those* foods for good, they end up feeling great and keeping the weight off forever.

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Q: So, why do some of us lose weight and then put it back on again, even though we are careful what we eat?

A: Your body is not a bank account—it is a chemistry lab. Most diets focus on counting and cutting calories, but all calories are not created equal. Most diets don't target the real problem foods that actually cause you to gain weight and hold on to fat by causing inflammation, disrupting your hormones and hurting your metabolism. Food is information. No matter how motivated you are or how careful you are to eat "right," you'll never lose weight and keep it off if you're eating foods your body can't tolerate or that send your body the wrong messages. *The Virgin Diet* helps you create a customized diet based on the foods that work for your unique body chemistry and explains which foods tell your body to burn fat and build muscle so that you can lose fat fast and keep it off, without feeling deprived. Your fat is not your fault: you've just been given the wrong rules to follow.

Q: What is a food intolerance and how does it differ from a food allergy?

A: A food allergy triggers a different kind of immune response than food intolerances. Food allergies are acute responses to food, meaning the body responds quickly, which makes them easier to catch. Food intolerances, sensitivities and reactions, on the other hand, occur more slowly and symptoms develop over time, making them harder to identify. Food intolerances are chronic and can actually develop with age. While 75% of the population suffers from food intolerance, people usually don't make the connection between, say, the omelet they have for breakfast every morning with the fatigue or bloating they get midafternoon. They are often told these symptoms are "normal" for them or "normal" for their age, but the real culprit is usually food intolerance. You don't have to settle for "normal!" By pinpointing your food intolerances, you can feel and look your best at any age.

Q: What are the 7 high-FI foods that should be removed from our diets?

A: In Cycle 1, readers will pull gluten, soy, dairy, eggs, corn, peanuts, sugar and artificial sweeteners for 3 weeks and they will see dramatic results quickly. At the same time, they will eat plenty of anti-inflammatory, healing

foods to reclaim their health and reset their metabolism. In *The Virgin Diet*, I explain why the high-FI foods are so damaging, outline the sneaky places these foods can hide and provide simple swaps (like having almond butter instead of peanut butter) that make it easy to follow the plan. Of course, losing up to 7 pounds in the first week makes for great motivation, too! In fact, my clients often feel so good in the first 3 weeks and are so happy with their dramatic weight loss results that they stay off of all 7 high-FI foods for life instead of testing the foods in Cycle 2 of the program.

Q: How do we find out if we have an intolerance to one of these foods?

A: In Cycle 1, you're going to pull all 7 foods and replace them with healing foods. In Cycle 2, after you have healed your gut and reversed inflammation (and lost a lot of fat, fast, in the process), you'll reintroduce 4 of the foods—soy, gluten, eggs and dairy—one at a time to see how you react. If you have an intolerance to a food, your newly healed body will have a magnified reaction. In Cycle 3 of the diet, which is designed to help you keep the weight off for good, you'll want to keep that food completely out of your diet (and after you experience the reaction, trust me, you won't want to eat it!). But if you don't have a reaction to a food, you can incorporate it into your diet occasionally without worrying about gaining weight or stalling weight loss.

Q: Wait—why is soy on the list? Isn't soy a great source of non-animal protein?

A: Soy has been marketed as a miracle food, but there is no joy in soy. As a form of protein, soy is actually low in methionine, an essential amino acid, and another immune-boosting amino acid, cysteine. While it is a plant source of protein, it is also a plant source of estrogen, which disrupts hormone balances for both genders. It is bad for your thyroid and has been linked to certain cancers. What is more, most soy is genetically modified (GMO), and it usually takes a lot of sugar to turn this highly processed food into tofu, soy burgers, soy milk or soy cheese (which doesn't even taste good, anyway!). In the end, soy is more likely

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to cause weight gain than weight loss, along with a number of other health problems. So do your body a favor and trade that soy milk in for delicious coconut or almond milk. After Cycle 1, if you don't have reactions to soy, you can occasionally enjoy less processed forms of soy.

Q: What about nonfat dairy products? How can I get calcium without them?

A: There is a dairy myth out there that says cow's milk is the best source of calcium. But there are studies that link cow's milk consumption with an increased risk of bone fractures in women and certain cancers. Seventy-five percent of the world's population is lactose intolerant, and dairy can often promote insulin resistance and trigger autoimmune diseases. And dairy can cause acne, too. Perhaps more surprising to most people nonfat dairy is worse than full-fat, because it's usually higher in sugar. The truth is nuts and seeds and leafy green veggies are great calcium sources, and you don't ever need to have a glass of cow's milk again to get your calcium intake. Fortunately, there is a whole range of products—coconut milk, almond milk and other dairy substitutes—that are often even more delicious than cow's milk and are much better for you.

Q: Isn't fructose a natural sugar found in fruits and vegetables? Why should I avoid it?

A: You don't need to worry about the fructose found in whole fruits and vegetables—fruit is fabulous if you're eating the right kinds in the right amounts, which I explain in *The Virgin Diet*. But fructose in other forms like fruit juice, or high-fructose corn syrup or agave-sweetened "health" foods is the worst possible sugar you can eat. It's metabolized differently from other sugars like glucose and studies show that fructose is *40 times more likely than any other sugar to make you gain weight*, because up to *one-third of fructose calories get stored as fat*. Fructose doesn't trigger your brain to release leptin, the hormone that lets you know when you're full, so you can consume enormous amounts of calories from fructose without feeling satisfied. And all of the fructose you consume goes straight to your liver, which stores a lot of it as fat and converts the rest into free fatty acids, triglycerides and cholesterol, which turn into fat and artery-clogging plaques.

Q: How can I have an intolerance of a food I crave?

A: Ironically, we crave the foods we're most intolerant to. It's similar to an addiction: you know how serious the addiction is based on how serious the withdrawal symptoms are. That's because eating a food you can't tolerate causes an IgG (Immunoglobulin G) response in the body that create IgG antibodies. (As opposed to food allergies, which create a different type of antibody called IgE antibodies.) As you eat more of the food, you create more antibodies that keep your immune system fired up on a chronic basis. When you eliminate the problem food, your IgG antibodies actually miss the food that caused the IgG response and you feel intense cravings for the very food that's causing you the most trouble. Cravings the first few days of the diet tell you that you are on the right track—they mean that the food was reactive and the program is working. The good news is that these cravings usually subside after the first few days, and most people don't even miss the problem foods after the first week. And they certainly don't miss the inflammation, health problems and weight gain it was causing!

Q: How does one begin *The Virgin Diet*? How long does it take?

A: *The Virgin Diet* is a 3-cycle plan for fast and lasting fat loss. In Cycle 1, readers transform their bodies by eliminating the top 7 high-FI foods for just 3 weeks. Readers will see dramatic results almost immediately, losing up to 7 pounds in the first 7 days. As they eliminate the high-FI foods, they eat plenty of healing, anti-inflammatory foods. This powerful combination helps readers reverse inflammation, eliminate bloating, get rid of fatigue and feel better than they have in years. In Cycle 2, readers reintroduce soy, dairy, eggs and gluten, one at a time, to customize the diet to their unique body chemistry. In Cycle 3, readers learn how to maintain the amazing health and weight loss results for life.

Q: But what if I love one of these foods and don't want to cut it out of my diet? What if it turns out I don't have an intolerance to that food?

A: I'm only asking you to pull the 7 high-FI foods for 3 weeks during Cycle 1. I promise, you can do anything for 3 weeks, and the results will be so worth it! I

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provide you with plenty of swaps and substitutions so that you don't feel like you're missing out on your favorite foods. During Cycle 1, we're giving your body a chance to heal and reverse years of inflammation and damage. You'll see dramatic results in the first week and after 3 weeks, most people are so thrilled with the dramatic fat loss, feel so much better and find the program so easy and delicious that they don't want to reintroduce any of the foods in Cycle 2! In Cycle 2, you test four of the foods to see whether or not they work for you. If you don't have an intolerance to a food, then great, you can include it as part of your diet, so long as you don't overdo it—I explain how in the book. If you do have an intolerance to one of your favorite foods, you'll feel so much better without it that you won't be tempted to add it back to your diet. And the good news is that as your body heals over time, you may be able to tolerate the food again someday—in the book, I explain how to re-challenge reactive foods periodically.

Q: I was raised to believe “everything in moderation.” Why do you say “moderation will make me fat?”

A: When it comes to weight loss and healthy eating, moderation doesn't work. Why? Because weight gain for most people is generally gradual, averaging almost a pound a year as the result of only moderate changes in diet. In 10 years, that means you're 10 pounds heavier. In 20 years, 20 pounds. Moderation makes you fat for several different reasons, including:

- ➔ Moderation creates a slippery slope: If a little bit is okay, then a little more is still okay.
- ➔ Moderation sets you up for cravings: If you eat a little bit of something, it makes you want more and more.
- ➔ Moderation ignores the serious damage some foods can do: Your body isn't a bank account—it's a chemistry lab. A problem food,

even in moderation, causes an IgG response that turns you into an inflamed, bloated, fat-storing, weight-loss-resistant mess.

Q: I travel a lot on business and diets can be so complicated—how can I incorporate *The Virgin Diet* into my busy life?

A: I'm on the road at least 3 to 4 days a week for work and I'm the mother of 2 amazing teenage boys. So *The Virgin Diet* has to work on the go, on a budget, on the road, for the whole family, and in a hurry. The program includes hundreds of healing and anti-inflammatory foods, so there are plenty of healthy choices wherever you go. And in the book, I explain how to eat by *The Virgin Diet* Plate, which makes it simple to find or make fat-burning meals whether you're traveling, eating out or trying to feed you family. The book is also full of easy tips for dining out, like doubling your veggies and skipping the starch, and how to handle tricky situations, like special dinners and events, so you're bound to be successful, no matter what.

Q: Will I ever be able to eat high-FI foods again?

A: The beauty of *The Virgin Diet* is that you create a customized plan unique for your body chemistry. In Cycle 3, I explain how to make the diet work for you for life. If you don't have a negative reaction to a high-FI food, it can be part of your diet long-term, so long as you don't overdo it. If you have a negative reaction to a high-FI food, trust me, you'll feel so much better that you won't be tempted to eat it again! I also explain why some high-FI foods should be avoided 95% of the time (corn, peanuts and sweeteners) and how to use the 3-bite rule to splurge on occasion without sabotaging your results.

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