



Petronella Ravenshear is the nutrition therapist behind the Human Being Diet
 ABBY COHEN

HEALTH

Would you do the Human Being diet, summer's new weight-loss trend?

It's the fashionable new nutrition plan that has Chelsea buzzing. The catch? It's pretty hardcore, says Peta Bee

[Peta Bee](#)

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Tired of intermittent fasting and restrictive plant-based eating? Whisper it, but the secret weapon for weight loss among the sleekest, leanest women of southwest London is the Human Being Diet. Dubbed “HBD” by those who are on it, this three-month programme does not require you to cut out meat, carbohydrates or even alcohol in the long term and eventually

entails eating three square meals a day, but is hailed for its transformative powers.

Petronella Ravenshear, the woman behind the diet, is the go-to nutrition therapist for the fashion set: her clients number Jemma Kidd and a host of designers, including jean queen Donna Ida. The approach centres on regaining “metabolic balance and better digestive health” and quietly, over the past 12 months, it has garnered a mass following on social media.

Ravenshear herself has nearly 24,000 followers on Instagram, while there are more than 10,000 posts on the hashtag #thehumanbeingdiet with tips and recipes from her loyal disciples. But it is through word of mouth that most women are learning of the diet's effects. “I'm now on day 17 and have never felt so alert and energised. Although I wasn't at all overweight to start with, I have visibly lost weight,” says Jacqueline, 36, from Barnes, southwest London. “Everyone I know is now doing it and there is a real buzz about the diet in this part of town.”

Ravenshear, who had a booked-out clinic in Chelsea before the pandemic but has recently relocated to Florida, says the diet has been years in the making but that its popularity spiralled when she self-published a book on its principles at the end of 2018. “Not everyone can afford private nutrition consultations and appointments at my Chelsea clinic were permanently full, so I wanted to get the word out there,” she says. “The response has been phenomenal as people discover the diet works for them.” It's not plain sailing. Even she describes the first 48 hours — or phase one — of the plan as “pretty brutal” and it gets off to a less than appetising start. Half an hour before breakfast on the first day she recommends taking a dose of 4tsp Epsom salts, dissolved in warm water and washed down with a glass of fresh water, to soften the stools and prevent constipation.

After that it's a matter of eating no grains, protein or fat: only vegetables, preferably blended into a soup, two to three times daily. Root vegetables — beetroot, turnips and potatoes — are off

the menu but, other than that, a 100g combination of any vegetables such as mushrooms, courgette, cauliflower, onion and spinach is required at every meal. Ida adds curry powder and turmeric to hers to make it less bland and there are endless images of mostly green recipe concoctions on social media. It should be followed with a strong black coffee chaser, which Ravenshear says aids digestion. “Coffee is one of the most heavily sprayed crops, so it’s really important you opt for an organic source,” she says.



Jean queen Donna Ida is one of Ravenshear's clients
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Phase two is the “reset” stage of the diet. On days 3 to 16, protein — chicken, salmon, minced beef or tofu — is reintroduced to your three daily meals but still no alcohol, with calorie intake peaking at just 600-800 a day. “Aim for about 100- 120g protein and an equal weight range of vegetables each meal,” Ravenshear says.

“And try to eat an apple every day.” Apples, she says, are a wonder fruit: they’re packed with the soluble fibre pectin, which has been shown to help lower cholesterol levels, but also with beneficial polyphenols. “These plant compounds have been found to protect against the development and progression of several chronic conditions including cancer, diabetes [and] cardiovascular problems,” Ravenshear says, “and the combination of polyphenols

and pectin is loved by our gut microbes, which flourish when they are consumed.” By this stage, the rigours of the diet should mean weight will fall off. Jacqueline says she has lost 12lb by day 17 and that her mother and a friend each shed between 14- 16lb in the first two weeks.

Beyond this and into phase three, which Ravenshear calls the “burn”, you face ten weeks — yes, ten weeks — of a similar approach, but with the addition of 1tbsp olive oil with each meal to provide healthy monounsaturated fats and, for your sanity, a weekly treat meal. Surprisingly, considering the restraint required at other times, she says this can include an Indian takeaway or big Sunday roast with all the trimmings and a glass of wine.

You get to eat more — about 1,200 daily calories — but there are still more rules to adopt, including forgetting any former leaning towards a time-restricted 16:8 eating window and consuming breakfast within an hour of waking. “So much nonsense is talked about breakfast,” Ravenshear says. “It triggers fat burning and resets our hunger hormones so that we can last through to lunch without needing a snack.” Eat a bite of protein before anything else on your plate, make no meal last longer than an hour and allow at least a five-hour gap between meals for thorough digestion.

By phase four, the ominous-sounding “forever phase”, Ravenshear says that “it’s a case of [keeping] the principles that work for you”, with an extra treat meal and glass of wine when you want. I’m exhausted even considering it, yet most of her clients claim that above all else the diet has heightened their energy levels. “We have forgotten how to eat well, nutritiously and regularly,” Ravenshear says. “For a lot of people it’s a case of having to re-establish better nutritional balance: weight loss is one of the side effects of that, but overwhelmingly people tell me that once they have adopted the diet they sleep better, have a healthier complexion, lower levels of stress and that they are rejuvenated, bouncing out of bed ready to tackle the day.”

www.thehumanbeingdiet.com

