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THE Diet THAT SAYS YOU'LL LOSE 3kg TONIGHT

The Werewolf Diet promises you'll shift your shape by losing weight if you sync with the moon's cycle.
By Lisa Witepski

Its fans call themselves werewolves – not because they grow fur and fangs after dark but because they follow the lunar or moon diet. The Moon Connection website (Moonconnection.com) explains that, by embarking on fast days timed to coincide with specific phases of the moon, you can lose as much as 3kg in one day (although a loss of 1kg is more usual). It supports this claim with reference to the fact that our bodies comprise 60% of water, so it 'makes sense' that the moon affects our bodies as much as it does the oceans.

HOW IT WORKS
The website provides two diet plans but essentially both are based on a juice cleanse. With the Basic Moon Diet Plan, you start a 24-hour fast as soon as the moon enters its full or new phase. The website stresses the importance of commencing the fast the very minute the moon phase begins, which is why it recommends downloading a moon-phase calendar (available on the site). If the phase begins while you're sleeping, you can start as soon as you wake up, they say. During the fast you'll take in nothing but liquids, as much as you want. This includes freshly squeezed fruit and vegetable juice as well as water, and you can even drink tea as long as it's without milk or sugar. (Honey is allowed.)

Moon Connection recommends drinking three litres of water 'to maximise the moon's efficiency' but you can drink even more if you like. The idea is that the more you drink, the greater the moon's effect on your body. They say it will stimulate your kidneys, enabling them to remove excess fluids from your body and flush out toxins. Although Moon Connection notes that it's never wise to fast for longer than 24 hours (as this causes your body to lose water and muscle), it says that you should feel 'lighter and cleaner' after your fast.

THE HARD-CORE VERSION
With the extended moon diet, you'll allow the varying phases of the moon to exert their different effects on your body. This diet starts with a 24-hour juice fast at the onset of the full moon. During the next phase, when the moon is waning, it speeds up detoxifying processes in the body. Your cravings should also ease off during this time – all of which, they promise, makes it a very good period for weight loss. To make the most of it, you should follow a balanced diet while continuing to drink eight glasses of water a day.

Next comes the new moon, which is when your body eliminates a lot of wastes and toxins – so it's back to the basic moon-diet plan for 24 hours, drinking only water supplemented by teas known to have a detoxifying effect, such as sage and green tea. This will help you lose even more water weight. The final phase, waxing moon, can be a tricky one as you are likely to experience cravings at this time. That makes it difficult to limit sugary and fatty food, which is one of the key guidelines to be followed at this stage. It's also important to stop eating after 6pm (which is when the moon is more visible). To help you keep cravings in check, you should drink more fluids than usual between 3pm and 5pm.

BARKING-MAD FAD, OR WEIGHT-LOSS KEY?

Ela Manga, a doctor in Johannesburg, acknowledges that the moon can have a profound effect on natural rhythms and cycles. 'It's no coincidence that the lunar cycle and the menstrual cycle are both 28 days long,' she says. 'In the past, when we lived closely with nature, women's menstrual cycles were far more in tune with the lunar cycle. You might notice that your menstrual flow is heavier at the time of the full moon. It's also widely accepted that the moon has an effect on our emotional lives.' So it's therefore plausible that the moon may have an effect on our internal water balance. 'But saying this can be manipulated to enhance weight-loss effects is neither realistic nor sustainable,' she says.

Manga notes that fasting is a part of many cultures who believe it to have both physical and spiritual benefits. 'It's interesting that many important religious days are celebrated around the time of the full moon,' she says. The ancient traditions seem to have acknowledged the significance of the full moon and the value of fasting at this time, so one of the diet's benefits may be that it brings our attention back to the moon's effects on our natural rhythms and cycles, and the value of living in tune with it.'

AN INEFFECTIVE TOOL

It's also a good idea to have a day of juice fasting as it allows the digestive system to rest and boosts the body's natural detox mechanism. But, says Manga, although timing your fast to coincide with the stages of the moon may enhance the spiritual aspect of the process, it should not be seen as a weight-loss tool. In fact, she warns against any diet that offers a quick, dramatic weight-loss solution,

especially those which focus on food restrictions. Not only are these unsustainable but there may be rebound weight gain after the diet ends. Moreover, a prolonged diet or fast may cause harm if not overseen by a professional. Dietitian Cheryl Meyer takes an even stronger stance against the lunar diet. She says that there is no reliable evidence that the moon affects the water content in our bodies. 'If the moon does reduce the water content of your body, any effect is temporary.

'There is no evidence that the moon affects the water content in our bodies'

The goal of true weight loss is to get rid of excess body fat, not water.' She also warns that the diet can be harmful, because when you limit your food sources, you will miss out on important nutrients. Plus, the extreme restrictions will lower your blood sugar, leaving you feeling light-headed.

THE 'DETOX' HOAX

Nor is detoxing necessary. 'We can't deny that additives are widely used in our food but our bodies are skilled in dealing with these baddies,' says Meyer. 'Your liver, kidneys and digestive system are perfectly capable of dealing with your eating habits – although it's never a bad thing to avoid junk food.'

Her suggestion? 'If a diet has a start and finish date, it's likely to fail because it's just an interlude from the nutritional behaviour that made you put on weight in the first place. The best thing is to find balance – don't go from one extreme to another.'

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