

**Viva!**  
H E A L T H

# 5:2 vegan-style

By Juliet Gellatley and  
Jane Easton, Viva!

Losing weight fast

Why intermittent fasting  
is safe and works! Includes  
tips and vegan recipes

£1

The world is awash with diets all promising that they are the one for you. Juliet Gellatley – Viva!'s founder, director and qualified nutritional therapist – looks at the science behind intermittent fasting and asks: 5:2 – better than other diets? Jane Easton, Viva!'s food and cookery coordinator then shares her experience of the 5:2 diet, giving tips and recipes

# Hard and fast?

By Juliet Gellatley

When I first heard about the 5:2 diet I was sceptical. What sparked my interest was the attitude of friends. This diet is the only one they can bear doing, and what's more, it's working!

Science is not conclusively in support of fasting, and neither am I. Total withdrawal of food can have short-term side effects such as headaches, dizziness, fatigue, abnormal heart rhythms and low blood pressure. Longer-term

fasting can interfere with the immune system and vital bodily functions and can damage the liver, kidneys and other organs. However, the 5:2 diet is not about total fasting – it allows 500 calories a day for women and 600 calories a day for men, two days a week. The other five days you are encouraged to eat healthily but are not calorie restricted.



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**Juliet Gellatley**  
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Juliet has a degree in zoology and is a qualified nutritional therapist. She founded and directs Viva! and Viva! Health and is an authority on vegan health and nutrition.

She has given hundreds of public talks on all the vegan issues and is author of several books, guides and reports.



## Jane Easton

Jane is our food and cookery coordinator and creator of recipes. She is an accomplished public speaker and cookery demonstrator. Her expertise is on hand for you at our Vegan Recipe Club [www.veganrecipeclub.org.uk](http://www.veganrecipeclub.org.uk)



## Double the health benefits! Using the *V Plan Diet* with the 5:2

I strongly recommend Viva's *V Plan Diet*, a vegan diet which shows you how to eat well for life, as by far the best way to lose weight healthily and safely, using the 5:2 idea as a tool within it to speed up loss of body fat. The *V Plan* does not restrict calories and there is no boring measuring of portions!

Online see the *V Plan* at  
[www.vegetarian.org.uk/guides/index.html](http://www.vegetarian.org.uk/guides/index.html)

## Evidence Breast cancer prevention with weight loss

There is convincing research to show the 5:2 diet works. Dr Michelle Harvie is a dietician at the Genesis Breast Cancer Prevention Centre in Manchester. Because women who are overweight are more likely to contract breast cancer, she has spent years studying how best to safely help women lose pounds. One of her recent trials involved 115 women – some ate a 1500 calorie Mediterranean diet (full-time diet) and were encouraged to avoid alcohol and high fat foods. Another group was asked to eat normally five days a week but to eat 650 calories for two days a week.

## 5:2 vs daily calorie counting

After three months, women on the 5:2 diet lost an average of 4kg (8lb), while those on the full-time diet lost an average of just 2.4kg (5lb). Dr Harvie says: "The 2 day diet is a much more effective way of losing weight and keeping it off. In our

trials people lose weight and body fat twice as quickly as those on a standard diet." She believes the 5:2 diet is more effective mainly because people stick to it. She has found that people's good intentions slip on a full-time diet, whereas on the 5:2 they readily comply. Having reached their intended weight, people then have just one calorie restricted day a week and that is enough to stop the weight slipping back. She says her research shows "it is doable and easier than a normal diet – and that's the reason it is successful."

In other words the diet works simply because if you eat 500 or 600 calories two days a week and don't significantly overcompensate by stuffing yourself rotten the rest of the week (!), you lose weight at a steady pace.



## The fat controller: insulin and the 5:2

Medical journalist, Dr Michael Mosley researched the diet for a BBC *Horizon* programme in 2012. He believes that there is more to it than that. And the answer lies with insulin. When we eat food, particularly 'junk' carbohydrates such as white bread, white rice or pasta, cakes, milk chocolate, crisps, fizzy drinks and alcohol, our blood glucose levels rise and the pancreas secretes the hormone insulin.

Although our cells prefer glucose for energy, the body does not want high levels. Insulin regulates sugar levels by enabling our cells to store glucose in a stable form called glycogen.

Dr Mosley says: "What is less known is that insulin is also a fat controller. It inhibits the release of stored fat. At the same time, it forces fat cells to take up and store fat from your blood. Insulin makes you fat. High levels lead to fat storage, low levels to fat depletion."

There is some research to suggest that eating too often, as many of us do, leads to elevated insulin levels so that our bodies become stuck in fat-storing mode. Dr Mosley explains: "Only after a few hours of fasting is your body able to turn off the 'fat storing' and turn on the 'fat burning' mechanisms."

Further, research shows that 5:2 fasting reduces a hormone called IGF-1, insulin like growth factor 1 which has growth promoting effects in almost all cells of our body. Elevated levels in later life are linked to cancer and accelerated ageing. Dr Mosley tried the 5:2 diet for three months and lost 9kg (19lb); his risk of diabetes decreased (measured by his fasting glucose), as did his risk of heart disease (measured by cholesterol and triglyceride levels) and his cancer risk very significantly lowered (measured by IGF 1 levels).

What of my friends on the vegan version of the 5:2? Lola Grant, 46 says: "The hunger comes and goes in waves on the fasting days and I feel slightly irritable (especially around people eating!) but on the positive side I feel lighter and more energetic! I lost half a stone quite quickly (1 month). It is the only diet I would have any real

chance following as I am not very good at self-denial (she says, stuffing a marshmallow in her mouth)." Cathy Keegan, 55 enthuses: "I have lost almost a stone in 7 weeks. I sleep better, have more energy and my stomach is flatter. It's the only diet I've stuck to – ever!"

## Is it safe for everyone?

It is not recommended for people with diabetes, pregnant women or those with a history of eating disorder – although there isn't any evidence it can trigger anorexia or bulimia, fasting can be addictive. And as with any diet, it's best to get advice from your GP, particularly if you have a medical condition or something like borderline diabetes type 2.



# What is the 5:2 diet and how do I go about it

By Jane Easton

Well here I am, having lost over 10K – over 1½ stone in three months. I’ve also lost 5cm from my waistline – sensibly and gradually. There is no loss in muscle tone and I feel much better.

It’s been remarkably easy. I had tried other methods but the thought of being on a low-fat diet for months made me want to reach for the cake immediately. So when a couple of friends told me about their successes with this diet, I ordered the book that very day and just went for it.

## What is the 5:2 or Fast Diet?

Although the 5:2 is also known as ‘the intermittent fasting diet’, it doesn’t mean going without food for two days every week. Rather, it means that you have two low-calorie days per week: 500 calories a day for women and 600 for men, and five days of eating normally.

The rest of the week means I can eat (and drink) reasonable amounts of food. This doesn’t mean it’s a licence to go crazy and in fact, the fasting days have helped to reduce my overall appetite. But it does mean I can drink some wine or eat cake – not to mention indulging my love of Indian food!

## How do you do it?

- **Choose two intermittent fasting days – eg Tuesdays and Thursdays – then restrict calories on those days. The days can also be tweaked to fit in with your schedule, eg if you have a prior dinner engagement on a fast day, switch to a Monday or whatever.**
- **Weigh yourself on the same day and time each week, preferably in the morning, before eating. Measure your waist and log the changes to your body mass index (BMI) regularly – see section *When you begin*.**

- **Keep a simple food and fasting diary – research shows that this is a key tool in keeping you focused and successful. It really helps you to be honest with yourself and examine good and bad habits!**

## When you begin

Make a record of your weight and BMI. Body Mass Index (BMI) is a good way to check if you’re a healthy weight for your height. Use a BMI calculator on the NHS web site: [www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Healthyweightcalculator.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Healthyweightcalculator.aspx)

- Buy a pocket sized small notebook. Use it to:
- **record start weight, BMI and weight loss**
- **record what you eat on all days**
- **write 2-3 three sentences describing each day – how it felt, successes and problems etc.**
- **update weight, BMI and weight regularly. Include details of how much you’ve lost.**

## When to eat

On your fasting days, you may want to eat breakfast and an evening meal which takes you to almost your total calorie allowance. At lunch time you could try hot drinks such as 1tsp Marmite in hot water (10 calories); herbal teas or black tea, or cold water with a slice of lemon. Or use 50ml unsweetened soya milk (about 17-20 cals) if you fancy a nice coffee or tea.

Or a lunchtime snack might be 100g of carrot sticks – 42 cals or a sachet of miso soup, around 27 cals.

Remember, this is a fasting day – to burn calories and promote the physical and neurological benefits of the diet, it’s good to feel a few hunger pangs. Distract yourself with work, go for a walk – it helps keeping busy! And remember, tomorrow is a normal eating day!

# What to eat: 5:2 vegan recipes

While the book, *the Fast Diet* and website are useful, most of the recipes aren't vegetarian, let alone vegan. So here are some vegan recipes.

The recipes are based on a total daily intake of 500 calories – ie for women. However, each recipe comes with an additional suggestion for men to increase it to their allotted 600 calories.

We hope you enjoy them!

Here is the complete list of recipes with ideas on how to combine and rotate them. It's a small list but you can mix and match to ensure the calorie limit is correct, as we've done below.

## 1. Porridge with Berries & Cinnamon

Calories: 210 – fewer if you omit the soya milk (using only water) and/or the syrup

Men's Extra: 4 tbsp plain vegan yoghurt (30 cals)

Serves: 1

Time: 2-5 minutes (if you soak the oats overnight)

Using jumbo oats fills you up better and keeps you going longer. Like all wholefoods, this type of oats is low GI or slow release, so they keep your blood sugar more steady!

### Ingredients:

- 40g jumbo oats (147)
- 50g blackcurrants (22)
- Pinch cinnamon (0)
- 50ml unsweetened soya milk (21)
- 1 tsp agave or maple syrup (20) or sugar (16)

### Method:

1 Cook the soaked oats with a little water, adding a bit more if it starts to stick – 2 minutes microwaved, a little longer on the stove.

2 Serve with the berries, cinnamon, soya milk and syrup.

1+7 (462 cals); 2+5 (485 cals); 3+8 (489 cals); 4+8 (490 cals); 5+9 (493 cals); 4+5 (459 cals); 1+6 (458 cals)

1. Porridge with Berries & Cinnamon (210 cals)
2. Plain Yoghurt with Fresh Fruit (259 cals)
3. Tofu Scramble (232 cals)
4. Baked Beans on Toast (233 cals)
5. Spiced Tomato Dahl (226 cals)
6. Griddled Courgettes with Mint, Puy Lentils & Cheezly (248 cals)
7. Green Beans, Spring Onions & Garlic Tofu with Soya-Chilli Dressing (252 cals)
8. Big Noodle Soup (257 cals)
9. Smoked Tofu with Broccoli & Teriyaki Sauce (267 cals)





## 2. Yoghurt & Fruit Breakfast

Calories: 259

Men's Extra: 4tbsp plain vegan yoghurt (30 cal)

Serves: 1

Time: 5 minutes

Some days a fruit breakfast is what your body needs! Alpro, Provamel and Tesco plain vegan yoghurt or 'alternative to yoghurt' are brands to look for.

### Ingredients:

- 100ml plain vegan yoghurt (50 cal)
- 100g chopped banana (95 cal)
- 70g chopped strawberries (20 cal)
- 100g blueberries (25 cal)
- 4 almonds, chopped – (8g) (69 cal)

### Method:

1 Mix everything together and serve.

## 3. Tofu Scramble

Calories: 232

Men's Extra: 50g plain tofu (38 cal)

A simple, delicious breakfast or supper

Serves: 1

Time: 10-15 minutes

### Ingredients:

- Oil spray, 2 squirts (2 cal)
- 50g onion, chopped (19 cal)
- 50g red/orange/yellow pepper, chopped (15 cal)
- 100g tofu (75 cal)
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard (8 cal)
- Pinch turmeric (0 cal)
- 100g baby spinach (25 cal)
- 1 slice wholemeal bread, eg Hovis (88 cal)

### Method:

1 Fry the onion in the oil spray until it starts to soften – add a splash of water if it begins to stick. Add the chopped pepper and cook for another couple of minutes.

2 Crumble in the tofu and cook in, then add the mustard, turmeric and spinach. Cook in until the spinach is wilted or to your liking.

3 Serve on the slice of bread, toasted

## 4. Baked Beans on Toast

Calories: 233

Men's Extra: 1 tsp peanut butter (34 cal)

Serves: 1

Time: 5 minutes

A classic breakfast tweaked for the Fast Day regime!

### Ingredients:

- ½ tin reduced sugar/salt baked beans (145 cal)
- Slice wholemeal toast, eg Hovis (88)
- Pinch cumin (0)

### Method:

1 Heat the beans, add a sprinkle or two of cumin and serve on hot toast.



## 5. Spiced Tomato Dahl

Calories: 226

Men's extra: 1 poppadum (37 cal)

Serves: 1

Time: 40 minutes

A tasty, filling soup. Make the day before if possible – or perhaps make a double batch to eat on the second fast day, or freeze for future weeks.

### Ingredients:

- 2 squirts oil spray (2 cal)
- 80g red onion, thinly sliced (28 cal)
- ¼ tsp turmeric powder (0 cal)
- ½ tsp black mustard seeds (optional) (0 cal)
- ½ tsp ground cumin seeds (0 cal)
- A pinch of dried chilli flakes (optional) (0 cal)
- 1 clove garlic, chopped (5 cal)
- 500g tomatoes, chopped (105 cal)
- 500ml water
- 1 Green Oxo stock cube (6 cal)
- 20g red lentils (72 cal)
- 3 tbsp finely chopped coriander leaves (1 cal)
- 1 tbsp Alpro/Provamel plain vegan yoghurt (7.5 cal)

Men's extra

- 1 poppadum: (37 cal)

### Method:

1 Heat the oil spray in a saucepan, add the onion and cook until soft and lightly browned.

2 Stir in the turmeric, cumin, mustard seeds and chilli flakes. Cook gently for another minute. Use a little water or juice from the tomatoes if it starts to stick.

3 Add the garlic, tomatoes and lentils. Stir in the water and stock cube. Simmer for about half an hour, topping up with water if necessary, until the lentils are very soft.

4 Taste and adjust the seasoning. Mix the yoghurt with 1-2 tbsp water to make a pouring consistency. Eat the soup scattered with coriander and drizzled with yoghurt.





## 6. Griddled Courgettes with Mint, Puy Lentils & Cheezly

Calories: 248

Men's Extra: 10 or 20g Cheezly (25 or 50 cal)

Serves: 1

Time: 15 minutes

A nice, Mediterranean-inspired dish.

### Ingredients:

- 500g small courgettes (90 cal)
- 15 mint leaves (1 cal)
- 1 tsp olive oil (40 cal)
- 30g (2 rounded tbsp) cooked puy lentils (35 cal)
- 30g Redwood Cheezly mature white cheddar style (75 cal)
- Lemon zest (1 cal)
- A drizzle of lemon juice, 1 tsp (5 cal)
- 1 tsp dill – dried or finely chopped fresh (1 cal)

### Method:

1 Cut the courgettes into long, ½ cm wide slices. Mix with the oil and a pinch of salt.

2 Heat a ridged griddle pan or non-stick frying pan until it smokes. Cook the courgette slices, turning once, until striped with dark brown on both sides. You will probably have to do this in at least two batches. Add a splash of water if it starts to stick.

3 Transfer the courgettes to a bowl and mix with the lemon zest, juice, Cheezly, lentils and dill. Just before serving, mix through the ripped mint leaves.

## 7. Green Beans, Spring Onions & Garlic Tofu with Soya-Chilli Dressing

Calories: 252

Men's Extra: 50g plain tofu (35 cal)

Serves: 1

Time: 15 minutes

### Ingredients:

- 300g green beans (75 cal)
- 150g plain tofu, cubed (105 cal)
- 1 tsp crushed garlic or garlic paste (6 cal)
- 3 squirts of oil spray (3 cal)
- 4 thin spring onions, thinly sliced (40g) (13 cal)

### Dressing:

- 1 tbsp soya sauce (10 cal) – Shoyu type is the nicest. Use tamari for a gluten-free option
- 1 tsp olive oil (40 cal)
- ¼ tsp wine or cider vinegar
- A few drops of chilli sauce (optional)

### Method:

1 Steam the green beans until just done then cool under the tap.

2 Meanwhile, in a non-stick frying pan or wok, fry the tofu in the oil spray until golden brown. Add the spring onions and cook in for about a minute.

3 Mix the dressing ingredients.

4 Toss the beans, tofu cubes and spring onion in the dressing and serve.



## 8. Big Noodle Soup

Calories: 257

Men's Extra: 30g frozen fresh soya beans (edamame). (35 cals)

Serves: 1

Time: 10-15 minutes

A good soup that is full of flavour and texture.

### Ingredients:

- 50g Clearspring brown rice udon noodles (164 cals)
- 1 sachet of Clearspring miso soup (27 cals)
- 1 tbsp shoyu or tamari (Japanese-style soya sauce) (10 cals) Use tamari for a gluten-free option
- ½ tsp grated root ginger (1 cal)
- 50g spring cabbage thinly sliced (12 cals)
- 50g beansprouts (14 cals)
- 50g carrot (15 cals)
- 50g fresh shiitake mushrooms, sliced (14 cals)

### Method:

- 1 Cook the noodles according to the instructions on the packet, then put them in a sieve and cool under the tap.
- 2 Squeeze the contents of the miso soup sachet into a saucepan with 500ml boiling water. Add the soya sauce and ginger and bring to the boil.
- 3 Meanwhile, shave the carrot into long ribbons with a potato peeler.
- 4 Add the cabbage to the soup pan and simmer for a minute. (Men add the fresh soya beans at this point.) Add the carrot and mushrooms and simmer for another minute. Stir in the beansprouts.
- 5 Drain the noodles and put them in the bottom of a large soup bowl. Pour over the contents of the pan. Serve hot.



## 9. Smoked Tofu with Broccoli & Teriyaki Sauce

Calories: 267

Men's Extra: 2 tsp toasted sesame seeds (34 cals)

Serves: 1

Time: 10 minutes

### Ingredients:

- 200g broccoli florets (64 cals)
- 2 squirts oil spray (2 cals)
- 100g (half a pack) of Taifun smoked tofu, thinly sliced (185 cals)
- 1 tsp crushed garlic, fresh or paste (6 cals)
- 2 tsp Clearspring Teriyaki Sauce (10)

### Method:

- 1 Put the broccoli onto steam for about 4 minutes or until just tender.
- 2 Meanwhile, in a non-stick frying pan or wok, heat the oil spray then quickly fry the tofu slices.
- 3 Cook in the garlic quickly then the Men's Extra if using – toast the sesame seeds in the pan, stirring to prevent sticking.
- 4 Sprinkle the contents of the frying pan with the teriyaki sauce and serve hot, with the broccoli.

## Bang on target!

When you've reached your target, the two fasting days can be reduced to one to maintain your desired weight. Congratulations!

## Resources from Viva!Health

V Plan slimming guide:

[www.vegetarian.org.uk/guides](http://www.vegetarian.org.uk/guides)

Vegan recipes: [veganrecipeclub.org.uk](http://veganrecipeclub.org.uk)

Report on obesity, *Globesity*:

[www.vegetarian.org.uk/campaigns/globesity](http://www.vegetarian.org.uk/campaigns/globesity)



## Other useful resources

[www.myfitnesspal.com/food/calorie-chart-nutrition-facts](http://www.myfitnesspal.com/food/calorie-chart-nutrition-facts) this is a comprehensive calorie counter – search for specific products where possible eg Redwood's Cheezly. With more generic ingredients, eg porridge oats, soya milk, use the gram measurements rather than the US cup ones.

NB: we do not stock the *The Fast Diet* and *The 2 Day Diet* books as they allow meat, fish and dairy; the former also refers to animal experiments.

## Feedback

Please tell us how you get on and your experience of dieting. Email [jane@viva.org.uk](mailto:jane@viva.org.uk)  
We look forward to hearing from you!




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## 5:2 Vegan Style – losing weight quickly and safely with intermittent fasting

A practical guide on how to kick-start weight loss – and sustain it – offering reliable information, simple tasty recipes and helpful advice



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