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Photographs of Nina Shantel by Corey Reeves

For information about discounts for bulk purchases, contact, via email: fitgirl@thehigh5diet.com or message me on Instagram @FitGirlUSA

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own issues with food and body image, regardless of what they look like. Hopefully this book will enable all who read it to transform themselves into healthier and happier individuals.



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Introduction

Losing weight and being fit have nothing to do with vanity; it's a health issue. The more weight you carry, the more likely you are to end up with pain and diseases. The High-Five Diet is easy to follow and can meet everyone's fitness and weight loss goals. Whether you are extremely overweight, just need to lose a few pounds, or want to clean up your eating habits, this book is your solution.

This is not your typical diet book. You'll get the scoop on what fat-loss products and treatments work and which ones are gimmicks. Numerous diets abound, so I go over the benefits and problems of popular diets. I also provide superior lower-calorie food substitution options and give you my secrets on how to stop eating high-calorie foods without cravings. In addition, I go over how to make smart choices when dining out, and I list specific medical issues you can get tested for to explain why stubborn fat won't melt off. I also help you use your weaknesses and likes to your advantage, so that you can remove and resist temptations and banish bad habits forever.

You'll also get healthy, low-fat, low-calorie, dairy-free recipes, as well as vegan and gluten-free ones, along with advice and tips on how to eat well, lose weight, and become a healthier you. It doesn't matter what allergies or food

restrictions you have or what foods you avoid, because this diet can fit every person, every lifestyle, and every budget.

This diet program is a platform you can use for the rest of your life. It's a really easy system, which is why it is so successful. Here is how it works. Each day you try to obtain the maximum number of points such as eating more frequently, while discouraging unhealthy food choices so you can lose weight. The goal is to earn 5 points a day, which is how I came up with the name, The High-Five Diet. If you collect 5 points, you did a great job and you get a (virtual) congratulatory high-five. That's right; you only need to earn 5 points for success. You can do that. Daily worksheets are provided (see page 183 or order at www.thehighfivediet.com), along with a list of foods (page 179) to keep you on track.

Eating patterns I collected from men and women from different careers, backgrounds, and income show not only what other people are eating, but also why certain foods we've been taught are healthy are actually causing us to be sick and fat. The section titled "How the High-Five System Works" makes it easy to understand the program and how to apply the concepts so that you're eating better and making good choices for long-term health and happiness.

My husband never really cared about calories or super-clean eating until I came up with this idea. When I shared with him how it works, he told me I had to turn it into a book. It was not my original intention to write a diet book; the goal was for me to eat cleaner and lose some body fat. When I put my program to the test, I was the first subject. I couldn't believe how simple it was to follow. I finally found a way to eat clean and stop eating junk like chips and candy. Get excited, because now you have the road map to get to your destination: a fabulous and better you!

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My Qualifications

What makes me qualified to give advice on diet and exercise is not only my Fitness and Nutrition certification from the nationally accredited agency the American Council on Exercise, but also my unique health issues, in-depth research, trial and error, experience, and consultations with certified fitness instructors, endocrinologists, fat specialists, nutritionists, allergists, dermatologists, chiropractors, an herbalist, a psychologist, and a naturopathic doctor.

Whenever a person has a health issue that cannot be ignored, that person will eventually become somewhat of an expert in that area. My life-threatening food allergies forced me to learn about what ingredients are in packaged foods at a very early age.

When I was a newborn, my mother knew something was wrong with me since I was spitting up all the time and my skin had an unusual blue hue. Doctors diagnosed me with asthma and a true milk allergy. Many people have asthma and cannot tolerate milk, but the majority of children outgrow their milk allergies. I never outgrew mine, and my reactions got more severe with time.

Most people have an intolerance to milk, not a milk allergy. Those who have a milk intolerance lack the enzyme to break down lactose, which is the naturally occurring sugar found in milk. If these people have too much lactose, say from ice cream, they will end up with painful stomach cramps. This is agonizing, but not life threatening. I have a true milk allergy, whereas, I am allergic to the milk protein, and my response is anaphylactic shock, which can lead to death.

When I lived at home I had anaphylactic attacks at least four times a year due to cross-contamination, mislabeling, or from restaurant chefs who either weren't told by the waitress that I couldn't have a speck of dairy in my food, or didn't believe me, and didn't take the necessary precautions. Unclean spatulas, forgetfulness, and people not giving me a second thought were the culprits. You would be shocked at how many times a waitress would say, "But the cook put just a little butter on it." Later I would be down on my knees, head in the toilet bowl, barfing and crying for hours. After my stomach was completely emptied, I would pass out from exhaustion and not awaken until the following day.

Not surprisingly, I became fearful of food and eating out. I started making dinners for my family (me, Mom, and Dad) at thirteen years old. My parents took me to several doctors, where I had numerous allergy skin tests to confirm what I was allergic to. We read labels. Mom taught me the words to look for: lactose, whey, milk, butter, cream, cheese, and flavoring. She wrote to manufacturers. I sniffed my food and did the lick test to make sure my tongue didn't itch, swell, or tingle on any never-before-tried items, store bought or restaurant made. I avoided pizza parties because the cheese in the air drifted into my nose and through my lungs, which made breathing a problem. If I inhaled butter, cheese, or frothed milk, it felt like I was having a heart attack. I was so scrawny, with stick-thin legs; people had the nerve to ask my mother if I had polio.

When I was a teenager and went on dates, I always ordered the same items to prevent getting ill. If it was a fancy restaurant, I would request the shrimp cocktail. If it was a casual or fast-food restaurant, I would order the large French fries and a root beer. My dates had the same response: a smirk and the comment, “You’re a cheap date,” but those guys were jerks.

I remember the time I decided to order from the menu like a normal person and requested a meal instead of just an appetizer. I was seventeen, on a double date, and I was hungry. I went for the challenge and ordered the grilled chicken with vegetables.

When my plate of food arrived, I ate a few bites of the chicken, but stopped when my tongue started to tingle and swell. I drank some soda, hoping the sensation was in my mind, my mother used to tell me when I got sick, when nothing on the label listed milk, that it must be psychosomatic. Back in the eighties, if there wasn’t much of a particular ingredient, like dairy, it didn’t have to be listed on the label; today, if companies forget to list it, they recall the product and relabel it with “may contain dairy.”

My allergic reaction feels like the flu: stomach pain, headache, flushed face, and the urge to barf. During the date, I was feeling that awful, so I excused myself from the table and went to the bathroom. I tried to throw up by sticking my fingers down my throat. I had thrown up so many times in my seventeen years that even if I put my fist down my throat I couldn’t upchuck. I went back to the table, and no one but me knew how bad I felt. I cut up the rest of the chicken and pretended to eat it while sneaking it into a napkin. I was lucky that I’d only had a few small bites and that whatever milk product had contaminated my chicken was miniscule. If I had continued eating, or if the chicken had contained a lot of

butter, I would have been throwing up or ended up in the emergency room.

The other thing that was potentially dangerous was kissing. A guy couldn't kiss me if he had just eaten something with dairy. I don't want to kiss and throw up. That wouldn't grant me a second date.

Because of my life-threatening allergies, I had to read every label, every time, and learn what the words that sounded like chemicals actually were. What's lactic acid? Is that from milk (i.e., lactose)? I discovered that lactic acid is typically derived from fruit, so it's okay for those with milk allergies. Lecithin sometimes is from soy, but sometimes it comes from milk; if the source is not specified on the label, I would have to contact the manufacturer to verify. What a pain.

At thirty, I was hit with a horrible blow that would permanently limit my foods options even further. I contracted chicken pox, which is not a big deal for a child but can be life-threatening for an adult. With the nasty red pox in my ears, burning my head and stinging my body, the pain was so intense I thought I wouldn't make it. I survived but not unscathed. The virus attacked my pancreas so violently that it was barely functioning. I developed type 1 diabetes and would now have to take multiple insulin injections daily, count carbs, limit sugar and carbohydrate intake, and combine meals in a specialized manner.

In addition to avoiding dairy, I now couldn't have white rice, white pasta, candy or sugar (unless my blood sugar was dangerously low), or white bread. Panicked, I wondered what I would eat at restaurants. The majority of items are made with butter, and almost every plate includes white rice or white pasta. Brown rice wasn't available in restaurants back in 2006, and I don't think I've ever seen whole wheat noodles on a menu (unless it's soba noodles ... yuck). I always chose

Asian eateries since they rarely use butter or milk, but all the dishes come with white rice or white noodles. Combination Yakisoba is my absolute favorite: thin, delicious noodles tossed with a teriyaki–soy sauce marinade mixed with sautéed green onions, shrimp, chicken, and BBQ pork. I can't have that anymore? And how am I going to eat kung pao chicken without the rice? This sucks!

When I was young and complained about not being able to go to pizza parties or eat the snacks my friends ate, my mom would remind me that there is always someone out there who has it worse than you. You can complain and be miserable, or you can accept it and move on. I wasn't ready to accept being allergic AND being an insulin-dependent diabetic; I wanted to beat it, so I went on a mission to fight this thing.

With my blood test meter, I was able to determine which foods raised my blood sugar levels. I stopped eating rice, pasta, candy, and bread. I ate fruits, veggies, and lean meats. Then one time, about a half hour after eating a large sweet mango, I found my blood sugar increased 100 points, so mangoes were now out too. It wasn't just fruit that made my blood sugar rise: corn, squash, potatoes, tortillas, and stress were culprits. When I found this out, I was scared to eat anything and hardly ate at all.

Even after waking up in the morning, after not eating or drinking anything for twelve straight hours, my blood sugar would be higher than it was before I went to bed. I found out later that our bodies produce glucose for energy, day and night. It was then I realized that avoiding certain foods could not cure my diabetes, so I sought outside help from unconventional sources.