

## COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Pandemic - COVID Diet

**December 23, 2020.** I am calling my latest diet the COVID Diet, but it really has very little to do with the coronavirus. It just happens that I have begun dieting in the midst of the pandemic. The four components of my COVID diet are: growing a beard, abstaining from alcohol, getting vaccinated for virus, and losing 10 lbs. My goal is short-term and my resolution is that I won't consider shaving until I have been vaccinated and have lost 10 lbs. Until that first goal is reached, I won't set longer-term objectives. I'd love to lose 30 to 40 lbs but I settle for 10 to 15 because I know at that level I will feel and look markedly better. I am sure this may sound very goofy to everyone but me, but I do whatever works!

It seems like every January 1st I make a New Year's resolution to lose weight. But within days or a few weeks I get discouraged or lose focus, and I revert back to my comfortable lifestyle and slide back into my same weight range. For many years I have developed a routine of weighing myself at the same day/time (Tuesday morning) each week and I have many years of results recorded on a spreadsheet. For the past year I can observe that my weight has remained steady, fluctuating slightly within a 5 lb range. Nothing changes and I am led to wonder if I am at my natural weight; what I am destined to weigh?

For dieters the period between Thanksgiving and New Years is always a challenge; a time filled with the usual overindulgence in food and drink during family celebrations and office and neighborhood parties. So by the time I conduct my official New Years weight-in, I have often gained an extra 5 or so lbs. Hence, the net effect of many of my past failed New Years' diets has been just the loss of the Christmas bloat and I seem to quickly land back in the same old weight range.

But I am optimistic that this year is going to be different?. About 10 days ago I ended up in the Emergency Room with a nasty Urinary Tract Infection (UTI), and the antibiotics to fight the infection prohibited me from consuming alcoholic beverages. It resulted in me laying in bed unshaven for 5 days, with no consumption of alcohol and no appetite. Predictably I lost about 5 lbs. So with that jumpstart I have decided to start my diet early this year, before Christmas.

From past experiences the total abstinence from alcohol has been a key for me to successfully diet, and from time to time I have completely stopped drinking. Over 30 years ago I initiated an annual resolution to give up one thing for life. The first selection was donuts and the last donut that I ate was in 1989. Back then I used to engage in a nightly cocktail hour that featured martinis and Manhattans. On self-reflection I decided that I didn't really like the stuff, just the resulting buzz. So in 1990 I stopped drinking all hard liquor for life and restricted myself to beer and wine. Until a week or so ago I have been drinking mostly wine.

In 2011 following a series of heart procedures I decided to stop drinking beer and wine completely for health reasons. It was reasonable to conclude that alcohol, which stimulates the heart, was likely a contributing factor to my irregular heart rate. What I also discovered is that alcohol may play a very big role in determining my weight. Over a period of about 20 months

(Jan. 2011 to Sep 2012) I refrained from totally from consuming beer and wine; I engaged in a daily exercise program; and I dieted under medical supervision, tracking my daily caloric intake and and sharing the data with medical overseers and advisors. I lost approximately 40 lbs during that 20 month period. Of course what seems to be the case with all diets, once I went back to old consumption habits I slowly gained most of the weight back over a 4 year period; eventually rising to what I wonder is my “natural weight.”

I didn't shave while I was recovering from the UTI and then I decided to let the beard grow for a couple of reasons, one being a diet incentive noted above. The second is that many stay-at-homes people during the pandemic have chosen to grow a beard; probably just a fad. For lots of years back in the 1970s and 80s I had a full beard, and it might be fun to let my grandkids see what I looked like with a beard. It is clear that my wife doesn't approve of the beard but she will be ok with it in the short-term, particularly if I am positively motivated.

In the past week my wife and I have received information that there is an outside chance that we both may be eligible to receive the Moderna vaccine soon. Of course we are very hopeful but trying to temper our excitement. If this possibility materializes, we could get the first injection in the next 2 to 3 weeks, followed by the second dose 3 weeks later.

That would put us into early February for what I will call Diet Decision Day. Once vaccinated, will I have lost a minimum 10 lbs and will have I refrained from alcohol? Do I shave off the beard or keep it as a further incentive? Building off the success, what will be my longer-term health and diet plans?