

The wedding day diet

Whether you want to lose weight, have glowing skin or simply boost your energy levels ahead of your big day, great nutrition is essential for brides-to-be.

By Laura Greaves

As all brides-to-be quickly discover, wedding planning is all about deadlines. Certain tasks must be completed by certain dates so that everything runs smoothly on the most important date of all, your wedding day.

Among the deadlines that most brides set themselves are those that relate to looking and feeling great on the big day. For some, it's about losing weight, while others want to get fit or tone a problem area. Others still are determined to have long, lustrous hair or flawless skin.

The good news is that, whatever health or fitness deadlines you're striving to meet, eating well will help you get there quicker and with energy to spare.

Weight-loss wonder foods

So you've set the wedding date and now you have a year or so to work towards looking and feeling your best on your big day. If you want to lose weight, you might be tempted to drastically cut your calorie intake. But this isn't necessary, according to nutritionist Dr Damian Kristof (damiankristof.com).

"Most weight-loss programs will have you losing 500g to a kilogram per week, but if you eat a great diet of fruits, vegies, wholesome proteins, fats and oils, you could lose one to two kilos per week just because you're healthy," he says.

"Eating healthily takes your body further faster and more safely than if you are dieting."

If you lose weight too quickly in the lead-up to your wedding, it's likely to come back with interest quicker than you can say 'honeymoon suite'.

"Rebound weight gain is the biggest side effect of very low-calorie dieting. You may lose the kilos for the wedding day, but you could affect your skin, your hair and your overall wellbeing," Dr Kristof warns.

"Eating vegies, proteins and fats with every meal means that you don't need to drastically reduce the calories."

Here come the brides

Real-life brides reveal the nutritional tips and tricks that worked for them.

"I switched my main meal to lunchtime as I needed the energy for training in the evening."
Sylvia Nugent, 32

"I've cut out a lot of sugary and high-fat foods and opted for fresher ingredients, like vegetables, making them the main part of every meal." Melissa Richards, 27

"I've been trying to eat healthier in the last few months by not going out to fast food places anymore and eating fewer lollies. I still eat them – but I just try not to go back for seconds!" Natalie Ooi, 26

"I eat pure protein for breakfast: full-fat cottage cheese, avocado and mushrooms. I'm not hungry again until 1pm, have energy to burn at work and am not tired in the afternoon." Simone Sleep, 37

"My fiancé has been very supportive and has changed his diet as well – he now takes home-cooked meals to work instead of buying takeaway food." Natalie Pilovski, 26

"I started cooking more of my own food rather than buying it, so I knew exactly what was in the food I was eating." Mandy Daddia, 28

And nutrient-rich foods like salmon, eggs, pomegranate, blueberries, spinach, small amounts of dark chocolate, kiwifruit, pineapple and oysters are great for a healthy body and mind.

But if there's one dietary rule to live by, it's variety, says Dr Kristof. "It's really important to get great variety in your diet. Strive towards having some fruit with your breakfast, four or five salad items or vegetables with lunch and dinner, with a small amount of avocado oil, macadamia oil or olive oil poured over the top," he says.

"Combined with a lean piece of meat, fish or chicken, this will manage your appetite, give you energy and have you as healthy as you could ever possibly be."

The right diet can even help you stress less. "Sipping a mug of herbal tea blended from chamomile, juniper berries, hibiscus, lavender, rose petals, vervain leaves and lemon grass can help," says Narelle.

"Homeopathic remedies such as Bach's Rescue Remedy drops, available from most health food stores, work well and are an absolute 'clutch purse must' on every girl's wedding day."

A festive feast

By the time your wedding day finally arrives, you're likely to feel so nervous and excited that eating is the furthest thing from your mind. But eating well on your wedding day is absolutely essential – attempt to get through the day on an empty stomach and you're

likely to feel tired and cranky. Plus, all that celebratory champagne will go straight to your head!

Whatever you do, don't skip breakfast on your wedding day. Even if you only nibble at a fruit salad with yoghurt, it's important to start the day in the right way.


If you can stomach it, try a slice of grainy toast with wilted spinach, grilled tomato and a poached egg.

This low-calorie breakfast

will fill you up without making you feel bloated, and because it's low-GI you won't have to contend with a growling stomach as you say your vows.

And even if you've had a sleepless night, Dr Kristof warns against too many cappuccinos on the morning of your wedding. "Even though caffeine can stimulate mental impulse and give clarity of thought, it still affects your cortisol levels and cortisol in your blood stream makes you tired and grumpy," he explains.

Once you're in the thick of preparing for the ceremony, it's unlikely you'll have time to eat, so ask your bridesmaid to slip some jelly babies or mints into her bag in case your blood sugar dips and you need a quick pick-me-up during the day.

You could also arrange to have muesli bars or fruit waiting for you in the wedding car after the ceremony. 

WEDDED BLISS

Once the big day is over, how can you and your new husband maintain the fantastic physiques you worked so hard for?

"Set boundaries for each other and hold each other accountable for health and vitality," Dr Kristof advises. "Your commitment to each other should also be a commitment to health and wellbeing. Agree to offer advice and assistance if health, happiness and longevity is high on your list of priorities."

The natural approach

Natural dietary supplements and herbs can also help with pre-wedding weight loss, says Melbourne naturopath Narelle Stegehuis (massattack.com.au).

"Folinic acid is the latest wonder supplement for weight loss. Recent research suggests it's beneficial for women who are overweight due to a faulty gene... that causes you to store fat instead of burning it off," she says. A simple blood test can screen for the defective gene.

Narelle also recommends brides-to-be eat more legumes, almonds, apples, seaweed and sunflower seeds.

"Herbs like *panax quinquefolium*, *avena sativa* and *lavandula angustifolia* are some of my favourites – use them to repair your metabolism when you're stressed and gaining weight," she says.

"Herbs like *galega officinalis*, *cinnamomum cassia* and *gymnema* are also highly recommended for managing weight gain."

Good to glow

Clear skin and shiny hair is at the top of most brides' beauty wish lists. All nuts and seeds promote healthy skin, especially almonds, sunflower seeds and pepitas.