

THE RIGHT WAY

Jessica Cooke talks getting fit and healthy before the big day

For most women, their wedding day is one of the most important days of their lives. It's probably also the most photographed and documented day of their lives so naturally the dream is to look healthy, trim and toned; to appear at the end of that aisle simply glowing in a perfect fitting dress that no guest (and no husband) will ever forget.

According to Personal Trainer Jessica Cooke, achieving this perfect body through fad diets, gimmicks and pills is not the way to go. "These methods to get in shape can be extremely bad for your health, and often make you gain more weight than the weight you lost, once you stop. Diet pills and meal-replacement shakes can lead to bad skin, hair and nails, constipation, diarrhoea, dizziness and fatigue.

Cooke advises eager brides-to-be that the best way to lose weight and shape up for your wedding is through a combination of a sensible diet and regular exercise. This way, you stand some chance of sustaining your weight loss long after the honeymoon tan has faded.

Getting the diet right

Following a low-GI diet will leave you looking and feeling great - which is pretty much essential for the big day! The glycemic index or GI is a measure of the effects of carbohydrates on blood sugar levels. Carbohydrates that break down quickly during digestion and release glucose rapidly into the bloodstream have a high GI. Carbohydrates that break down more slowly, releasing glucose more gradually into the bloodstream, have a low GI. Aim to always eat low-GI foods, examples of which are porridge, muesli, non-starchy vegetables and fruit, wholegrains (rye, spelt, oats, and wheat), nuts and pulses.

Avoid carbohydrates after 5pm, making sure you eat carbohydrates with breakfast



and lunch. At dinner try swapping pasta/rice/potatoes for a side salad, or non-starchy vegetables.

Drink two litres of water every day and stay away from junk foods at all costs. Cortisol is a powerful stress hormone in our body and its level increases when we eat refined sugar, drink caffeine or get stressed. Cortisol causes your blood sugar to spike, leaving you craving sugary, starchy foods.

Make sure to eat two small snacks between meals. Snacking will keep your blood sugar stable and prevent you from overeating at meals. A handful of peanuts or a small piece of fruit is ideal as they can be carried around. Other nutritious snacks include a tub of natural yoghurt, ten or so cashew nuts, a spread of hummus on Ryvita or oatcakes.

Enjoy one treat evening per week to help keep you motivated and on track. This will prevent you from falling off the

wagon entirely after the wedding.

Taking regular exercise, in conjunction with a healthy diet, will ensure you look your best. Running is a great way to exercise as all you need is a pair of runners and some motivation! Walking, swimming and fitness classes are also great forms of cardio and will help you burn off unwanted fat. These are all activities that can be carried out in groups so why not drag your bridesmaids along too?!

Cardio is a brilliant way to exercise and if all you want is to get your weight down for the wedding then that is fine. On the other hand, if you want to look toned and sculpted, you will have to do some resistance training. Think about the areas that will be on show. Maybe your back, arms, shoulders, collar-bone or maybe your dress is very fitted around the stomach. Resistance training will tone all these areas up. Lifting weights, using dyna-bands or taking part in a circuit or pilates class are all great forms of resistance training. After your wedding day, enjoy your honeymoon, but get back on the wagon once you return. Remind yourself of how confident and healthy you felt when you were making healthy food choices. Live your life by the 80/20 rule, being healthy 80% of the time. You always feel better when you exercise, you always feel better when you eat well.

Jessica Cooke is a Personal Trainer based in Galway who has recently launched The 40 Day Method, an online fitness and weight loss website, combining a low-GI diet with 20 minute workout videos, 5 days per week. By following The 40 Day Method, you can drop a dress size in just 40 days! Visit www.40DayMethod.com.

