

Activate good health

BY SARAH MACDONALD

If toning up or slimming down is part of your wedding plan you're not alone. A recent British survey of 3000 married women showed that in the lead-up to their wedding women shed on average 4kg, and 20% of them lost 12.7kg. New Zealand figures are likely to be similar.

The motivation factor

When it comes to getting motivated to lose weight, on the surface it seems simple – you're getting married! You'll be the centre of attention and this is your chance to really shine. However, this motivation is only a starting point. Lifestyle coach and motivator Belinda Jane of The New You Company believes the thought of 'my wedding day' is not enough to keep you motivated. Instead, she says, 'You need to clearly identify your specific goal and have a plan for how to reach it.' Your goal, for example, may be that you want to lose seven kilos to get back to the weight you were when you met your fiancé/e. Or perhaps you want to tone up your muscles so your arms, shoulders and back will look great in your wedding gown.

What better reason is there to get yourself into fantastic shape than your upcoming wedding? Naturally, you'll want to look your very best on your wedding day, and for many brides- and grooms-to-be that often includes shedding a few excess kilos.

It's important that your goals are realistic and achievable – unrealistic goals will only set you up for disappointment. If you're finding it difficult to set your goals, a trainer, motivator or lifestyle coach can help you, and also provide support with achieving them.

Just rewards

While your main goal will be to reach the desired weight or level of fitness by your wedding day, it's important to break up the task into several smaller, easier steps. This will help you keep on track, and you'll be encouraged by noting your progress as you get closer to your main goal. Reward yourself with treats; for example, your goal for the first month may be to drop your first two kilos, for which you'll treat yourself to a facial, an item of clothing, or a round of golf.

Some people are also motivated by a 'disincentive' system, says personal trainer and lifestyle coach Nalisha Patel of Health Mastery. 'This helps to make you accountable for your actions – or inactions. For example, on our 12-week

I do



want to lose
weight
the healthy,
easy way!

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challenge, if you don't work out on your scheduled days, you must make a donation to charity.'

seeking support

Surrounding yourself with supportive people is one of the most important steps to success. 'I don't know many people who can set goals themselves and keep them,' says Belinda Jane. 'Almost everybody needs an outside opinion.' That may be friends and family, work colleagues, your fiancé/e or a professional who you hire for specialist help. Most importantly, says Belinda, 'Avoid saboteurs – people who will tell you that you needn't worry so much about what you eat or working out.' While their words may sound kind, it's not what you need to hear if you are serious about reaching your important goals.

Sharing the challenge by losing weight with a friend, perhaps even a bridesmaid or groomsman, is an excellent motivator and support system. If you and your fiancé/e both want to lose weight, you could do it as a couple.

mind over matter

The path to weight loss and fitness is as much a mental one as a physical one. 'The hardest place to lose weight is in the top two inches [the mind],' says Weight Watchers spokeswoman Karen Church. Help yourself get there by getting in the right frame of mind. Embrace the challenge with a positive attitude. The word 'diet' conjures up negative thoughts and is only a barrier to your success. You don't need to diet to lose weight, you need to eat, but eat healthily and intelligently. And when it comes to exercise, you don't need to head off to the gym, you just need to get moving more. So, diet and exercise become eating and moving – much easier and more enjoyable.

food for thought

You are what you eat – it's true. So what are you eating? Keeping a food diary is a good way to help assess your current habits. For one week, write down absolutely everything that you eat and drink, and when. Analyse this to find your weak points, for example, do you tend to reach for a sweet snack mid afternoon? Do you eat a larger dinner than you need to? How many days a week do the so-called empty calories in alcohol pass your lips? This is a useful starting point for making changes to your eating habits. If you need help, show this to a nutrition and/or fitness consultant.

If you want to make significant changes to your eating habits, enlist some help. There are plenty of good resources in your library and on the internet, and some excellent professional weight-loss and fitness organisations. Stay away from anything that looks like a quick fix or fad diet, and follow the suggestions in our Healthy Eating Tips box on page 70. The best option is to adopt sensible eating habits that you can maintain long term as part of your lifestyle – like marriage, healthy eating should be for life!

get moving

Healthy eating alone is unlikely to produce the weight-loss results you want. 'You need the power of three: thinking, eating and moving all work together,' says Karen Church. If you're aiming to lose weight, you must 'move it to lose it'. Besides the obvious gym, weights and aerobics routine, other options include walking, jogging, swimming, tennis, social team sports, vigorous gardening or a dance class in which you and your fiancé/e could learn a dance for the wedding.

You can easily fit extra movement into your day by taking the stairs rather than the lift, getting off the bus a stop early, or stepping outside for a 15-minute walk after dinner, instead of sitting down to dessert.

resistance work

One extremely important factor that many people, particularly women, overlook when trying to lose weight is

your workout plan

Some points to consider before you put together a workout programme:

Consistency is key to success. Work out every second day.

Every other day is a rest day. Recovery is just as important as working out.

Your starting point will be determined by your current level of fitness. Your workout needs to challenge you – if you're used to walking regularly, pick it up a level by walking more vigorously so your body feels challenged – that's when you'll get results.

A fat-burning workout should get you puffing, but at a level where you can still talk. You should maintain this for at least 30 minutes each session.

One workout a week needs to include some high intensity work, so you're pushing hard and can't hold a conversation. Maintain high intensity for 15 minutes.

Include some resistance training.

Some things to keep in mind once you've started your workout programme:

The first two weeks will be the toughest but don't give up, even if you're tired. After the first two weeks you'll start to notice some results.

As the workouts get easier, exercise for longer or at higher intensity. Keep challenging your body and push it further each time.

Monitor your progress by repeating a challenge each month, for example, time yourself over a 500m swim, or see how many push-ups can you do in one go. As you get fitter you'll notice improvements.

Keep a record of everything you do. Write down your programme every two weeks and then keep notes of what you did each day and how it felt.

If you have specific health needs or injuries, consult a fitness professional before embarking on a fitness programme.

Here are some other exercise ideas that you could fit into your daily schedule. Just remember, unless you're doing resistance based activities (e.g. yoga, swimming), you need to get your heart rate up and to start puffing for the exercise to have an effect. netball • kayaking • horse riding • yoga • pilates • video/DVD exercise session • gym classes • skiing • snowboarding • hire an exercise machine for home • rowing • rugby • soccer • cricket • hockey • athletics • (ultimate) frisbee • sex • rollerblading • ice-skating • aqua jogging • power walking • clean your house from top to bottom

the importance of resistance work, such as using weights or swimming. Resistance work helps maintain and strengthen your muscles. 'Women need to understand that they should not fear gaining muscle,' says Julie Grapengiesser-Seavill of Bodytech Spa and Fitness. Without working your muscles with some form of resistance training they will naturally fade away, leaving your body weaker and actually less able to burn fat. 'You need muscle to burn fat. Resistance training builds and maintains your muscles, and will increase the amount of fat that your body burns,' she says.

Typically, as a woman ages from 20 to 50 years she can lose 6.9kg of muscle and gain more than 20kg of fat. Resistance training is essential to avoid this happening, so as well as doing cardio exercises, which increase the heart rate, make sure you include at least one resistance training session every week. Even three weights sessions a week won't make

cont:-

sample two-week programme

Monday	40-minute walk, including a hill. Sit-ups and push-ups – as many as you can of each without stopping, then move onto the next exercise and repeat.
Tuesday	Rest.
Wednesday	One hour of tennis, dancing or an aerobics session.
Thursday	Rest.
Friday	15 minutes walking up hills (high intensity). Squats, tricep dips and sit-ups – as many as you can of each without stopping, then move onto the next exercise and repeat. Alternatively, attend a vigorous gym class.
Saturday	Rest.
Sunday	One hour of cycling or swimming, or tackle a climbing wall.
Monday	Rest.
Tuesday	A 20-minute session alternating jogging and walking (jog for one minute, walk for two minutes). Then push-ups, chin-ups and sit-ups – as many as you can of each without stopping, then move onto the next exercise and repeat. Alternatively, attend a vigorous gym class.
Wednesday	Rest.
Thursday	One hour of cycling or swimming or tackle a climbing wall.
Friday	Rest.
Saturday	40 minutes of walking, including two hills or two sets of steps.
Sunday	Rest.

Thanks to Alison Storey of Stray Sport for this advice

BALANCE BY DESIGN

The healthy lunch for when there's no time to do lunch



"One Square Meal kick-starts Weta Workshop's day!"
- Richard Taylor, Academy Award winning director of Weta Workshop

A THIRD OF THE RECOMMENDED DAILY INTAKE OF
■ ENERGY ■ PROTEIN ■ CARBOHYDRATES
■ FIBRE ■ FATS ■ 10 VITAMINS ■ 5 MINERALS

healthy eating tips

- Plan your weekly meals, and shop off a list.
- Eat five or six small meals a day.
- Learn to listen to your stomach – only eat until you are comfortably full.
- After eating a plate of food, do something else for 20 minutes before reaching for more. Are you really still hungry?
- Drink eight glasses of water a day.
- Keep healthy snacks on hand, such as grapes, air-popped corn, salsa dip for raw vegetables, yoghurt and fruit for smoothies, pottles of fruit in natural juice.
- Start the day with some protein, such as an egg. It helps make you less hungry throughout the day.
- Use cooking spray instead of fat or butter for frying, roasting and grilling.
- Eat low-energy density foods that have a higher water and fibre content, e.g. fresh fruit instead of dried fruit, grapes rather than sultanas, yoghurt rather than cheese. These fill you up but contain fewer kilojoules.
- Eating out? Go Japanese – a healthy choice (just avoid the tempura).
- Double up to save time and effort – cook extra amounts of a healthy dinner. Leftovers can be used for tomorrow's lunch, or frozen and reheated when you're pressed for time another night.

you bulk up, but will define and tone your muscles, and help you burn more fat and lose weight.

Besides lifting weights, resistance training activities include swimming, horse riding, kayaking, rock climbing, and any exercises that use your own body weight as resistance, for example, push-ups and tricep dips, and many yoga positions.

keeping on track

On the flip side to working out well, make sure you sleep well too. More and more research is showing that eight hours sleep is essential for good health. Decent sleep helps balance the hormones that regulate appetite, and sleep deprivation can slow your metabolism by 30% to 40%.

Even with strong initial motivation, any number of hurdles might appear on the path to your goal. Some proven habits of successful slimmers include being active, having support from other people, planning meals, being aware of eating habits and motivators, and learning from experience. If you do fall off track, for whatever reason, don't despair. Belinda Jane advises you have a plan B, which you should devise on day one. 'Your plan B might say "If I fall back into unhealthy habits, call best friend Sarah". This will be arranged in advance and you know that Sarah will be there to give the pep talk you need.' Have your valuable support people in place as a safety net to help keep you on track when the going gets tough.

Nalisha Patel agrees. 'It's OK to have a bad day; don't punish yourself. This process is not just black and white, and missing a few exercise sessions does not mean that all is lost. The best thing you can do is just get started again.'

And when your wedding day finally arrives, and you're looking and feeling fabulous, by all means celebrate in style. And, remember, this will just be the beginning of your new, married and healthy life!

