



HOW AND WHAT TO EAT TO FEEL ENERGISED AND HEALTHY

To get the best results from That Girl™ it is essential that you pay attention to your diet. What we should and should not be eating and drinking may seem fairly obvious but busy lives and stressful environments often lead us to make poor or rushed choices. Moreover, there is a lot of conflicting information regarding diet and in particular, fat loss.

The following guidelines will help you change old habits regarding what you eat and drink, and as a consequence you will be provided with more energy throughout the day. This will help you lose weight and finally help you improve the way you look and feel.

POOR DIET

Feeling tired and bloated or just generally unwell is usually a consequence of a thoughtless diet or inefficient digestion and absorption. Nutrient poor food choices, skipping meals or eating erratically can lead to deficiencies of both macro (particularly protein) and micro-nutrients (vitamins and minerals). This can interfere with emotional and mental health – when food quality or quantity deteriorates, mood is often the first casualty.

It is important to be aware that the preservatives and additives found in processed food, along with pesticides and chemicals used to prolong the life of fruit and vegetables, all put increased stress on the body. The Liver is particularly vulnerable. Moreover, our milk and meat often contain antibiotics and hormonal residue, which is why it is important to choose organic animal products. All these added toxins can be stored in adipose tissue, which increases the risk for women developing cellulite.

We recommend when selecting foods you choose fresh, good quality produce, which provides the most nutritional value for the calories you consume. Some simple rules:

Avoid foods containing words you have not heard of or cannot pronounce. Avoid foods containing high glucose corn syrup, fructose glucose syrup, artificial sweeteners and foods that list sugar as one of the first 3 ingredients.

SKIPPING MEALS

Not eating breakfast or lunch and then having a large evening meal will disrupt your metabolism and almost certainly cause weight gain. You are giving yourself very confusing signals! During the day when you need the energy, your metabolism will slow down to conserve energy. When you then eat in the evening, your body will cling onto that energy and store it as fat to deal with the perceived threat of famine. Also, your body will struggle to digest that meal whilst you lie sleeping. You will therefore wake up feeling sluggish.

EAT MORE

Which would you choose?

A. 5 – 6 small balanced meals a day = How a “lean” endurance athlete eats.

B. 1 huge meal at night = How a Sumo wrestler eats!

Eating more frequently throughout the day can actually help you lose and manage your weight. By eating every 2.5 to 3 hours (3 smaller meals and 2 snacks), you will keep your energy levels higher and be less inclined to over-eat, maintaining a steady blood sugar level. Of course, you need to make effective choices and keep portions small, which by the time you finish reading the plan you will feel confident to do.

STIMULANTS

Too much caffeine, sugar and alcohol will tire you mentally and physically. Excessive alcohol depletes many vitamins and minerals and can disrupt the natural detoxification process of the liver. Moreover, alcohol destroys the blood sugar balance stimulating appetite and hence the need for the ‘carbohydrate loaded hangover breakfast’.

You don’t have to completely give up alcohol or caffeine for life, but you do need to be more careful about how much of these stimulants you really need. Ask yourself why you need the amount you consume? During the initial four weeks, avoid all alcoholic drinks and limit caffeine gradually during the first week to lessen the intensity of withdrawal symptoms. By week two, caffeine should be drunk not at all or in moderation and not after 2pm. Green tea is an ideal choice, rich in antioxidants and beneficial to fat loss. Swap to decaffeinated Green tea or Herbal teas after 2pm to ensure a restful sleep. If you want to continue drinking coffee, then try to consume this prior to exercise. Choose an Espresso rather than a drink such as a Latte, which is essentially milk with a little coffee. Decide on no more than one cup of organic coffee a day or 2 green teas (ideal choice) and preferably this prior to exercise.

MOOD AND BLOOD SUGAR

What you eat affects your mood, energy and hormones. Your mind and body are inextricably linked, how you feel will almost always determine what you want to eat or what you have eaten. People are often looking for a feel-good sensation when they eat. Unfortunately, they tend to go for the immediate 'hit' and taste sensation got from sugar, i.e. chocolate, biscuits, fast-food, coffee with sugar, fruit juice, dried fruit, Coke and carbohydrate rich meals such as pasta. These foods send your body into a spin. In fact, sugar has been described as one of the most addictive substances because of its effect on neurotransmitters such as serotonin and on endorphins (the happy chemicals).

Within seconds of eating these foods (high in sugar), the body seeks to neutralise their impact by releasing adrenalin (normally intended to cope with stress). Endorphin and serotonin levels also raise, hence the feel good factor gained from these foods. A rapid increase in blood sugar and a surge in energy are quickly followed by a sharp drop in blood sugar. This is because the body will produce insulin to balance out the amount of excess sugar in the blood. The problem is unless we are about to exercise, most of the excess glucose (sugar) will be stored as glycogen (short-term storage form of glucose) within the liver and muscles. Unfortunately, these stores are not so large and the excess glucose is transported into the fat cells where it is converted to glycerol and eventually, through conversion processes it forms triglycerides (essentially fat).

The more carbohydrate, especially quick sugar releasing foods (simple carbohydrates) consumed, the more insulin is produced. When insulin levels are too high, the body stops burning fat for energy and even worse encourages the body to hold onto fat stores. Furthermore, excess sugar causes an excess release of insulin, resulting in a rapid drop in blood sugar. Once again adrenalin and the stress hormone, cortisol are pumped into the bloodstream to release stored glycogen for energy. Unfortunately, the resulting physical sensation is hunger and exhaustion. When this process is repeated several times per day, the mechanism for dealing with stress is slowly exhausted, leaving an individual less and less able to cope.

The best way to remember it is to think of a roller coaster; with extreme highs being followed by extreme dips unless of course we learn to balance blood sugar. The following example shows what happens when we consume sugars and refined carbohydrates without good quality foods such as first class proteins:

TYPICAL HIGH-CARB BREAKFAST

- Fruit Juice – Most fruit juices are highly processed which destroys vitamins.

The juicing process removes the fibre content, increasing the impact on blood sugar.

- Cereal with skimmed milk – Low-fat milk contains a high level of sugar and water with some remaining protein once the fat has been removed. Cereals are often over processed and frequently contain the appetite stimulating glucose fructose syrup.

- Toast with margarine and marmalade – very high level of refined starch, saturated fats with no omega 3 value and the fruit and sugar in marmalade provide a quick releasing sugar hit on the body similar to that of dried fruit or a sticky toffee.

STRESS

Increased stress promotes the secretion of cortisol from the adrenal glands, which on acute elevation plays a protective role during demanding situations. The downside is more prolonged chronic stress which results in increased secretion of this hormone, which can lead to acute health problems such as central obesity, extreme fatigue, lethargy, insomnia, and premenstrual tension.

The physiological response to stress is the same for the person running from an attacker as it is for an individual worrying about a missed appointment. The stress response prepares us to fight or fly and therefore cortisol increases blood sugar levels in the body providing glucose for energy (this comes from the conversion of glycogen or protein found in muscle tissue). Of course, it's fair to say, most of modern life stressors do not require this energy, therefore, the vicious cycle of blood sugar highs and lows begins. These swings not only lead to the problems that cause 'fat around the middle' but are also a recognised mediator for increased appetite!

SLEEP

Sleep is also essential to stress management and weight reduction. Poor sleep can disturb cortisol balance and the immune response. Furthermore, recent research has indicated people who sleep less have lower levels of the hormone leptin responsible for inducing satiety. Increased levels of the hormone ghrelin are responsible for increasing appetite. In other words, decreases in leptin and increases in ghrelin caused by sleep deprivation are considered sufficient to affect appetite and hunger. Getting your 8 hours a night is therefore an aid to fat loss.

CRASH DIETS AND EXCESSIVE EXERCISE

Crash dieting, extreme calorie restriction alone is detrimental to fat loss due to the impact it has on reducing metabolism. This, coupled with excessive exercise, becomes a self-defeating battle that will never be won. It may be exciting to stand on the scales and see the pounds fall off, but this initial loss is likely to be water and the breakdown of muscle tissue (to provide protein for energy). This is not a sensible plan, as muscle is metabolically more active than fat, the more muscle you lose the lower your metabolism. You simply end up needing to eat less food before the weight piles on again. In order to get the results you want, the body needs to be well nourished otherwise it will rebel. Regular meals are simply a must!

SELF-CONTROL

Claiming back self-control is an integral part of the programme. A day spent worrying about food is simply draining and stressful and does little for your social life! To top it all, it usually results in you feeling negative and eating to feel emotionally better. Food starts to act like the universal band-aid. You have to change this self-defeating cycle in order to start to feel great. The answer is simple; ditch the junk food, crash diets, starvation, and start eating healthy nutritious foods, which will help with low mood. It is also essential to make sure you incorporate exercise into your life. If you catch yourself thinking negative thoughts, find the positive in the situation and move on. In Ayurvedic medicine, they believe our emotions are the root cause of ill health and weight gain. So think yourself fit and healthy and with a little hard work you can become that healthy person.

WHAT IS GLYCEMIC INDEX?

As we have learnt, we need to manage our carbohydrate intake due to its explosive impact on our blood sugar levels. It is important to understand that although complex carbohydrates are definitely a better choice, they still have a strong impact on blood sugar. The Glycemic Index (GI) is a numerical scale used to indicate how fast and how high a particular food can raise our blood sugar level. A food with a high GI will promote a more rapid increase in blood sugar compared with the moderate rise in blood sugar from a food with a low GI.

CARBOHYDRATES including complex carbs such as rice, rye and oats do score high on the GI table along with many fruits, especially tropical. This does not mean they need to be avoided but rather that they need to be combined with some essential fat and protein to decrease their impact on blood sugar. Quinoa, which is around 15% protein has a slightly lower GI than other grains and contains all eight essential amino acids. This, along with soba noodles made from buckwheat, are good choices for vegetarians. Note they should still be served in small quantities with extra protein.

LEGUMES in small quantities are an excellent choice due to their natural protein content and fibre which both lower their GI. In general, high-fibre foods take longer to digest and therefore produce a slower rise in blood glucose levels. This provides a feeling of satiety which helps prevent overeating.

PROTEIN rich foods such as fish, lean meat, nuts, seeds and tofu typically score lower on the glycemic index scale along with fats, but it is important to choose healthy fats such as those found in olive and flaxseed oils, fish, nuts and seeds.

NOTES ON ESSENTIAL FAT

Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids play essential roles that contribute to the health of every cell in the body. They are actually important in shortening the time fatigued muscles take to recover and are vital for good skin and energy. These acids are also key in reducing the pain and inflammation of arthritis and reversing pre menstrual tension.

Both omega 3 and omega 6 fats need to be provided in the right balance for optimal health. Although omega 6 plays an important role in the body, it has become over abundant in the modern diet. On the other hand, omega 3 tends to be relatively lacking and yet is vital for its anti-inflammatory effect, cardiovascular health and benefits to weight management. In short, too high an intake of omega 6 (and saturated fat) can replace the essential store of omega 3's.

For good health, it is vital to consider the ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fats in your diet. Consume healthy sources of omega 6 such as hemp seeds or hemp oil (which also contain omega 3~), pumpkin and sunflower seeds, nuts and sesame oil.

Omega-3 rich foods include salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring, anchovy, sardines, flaxseed oil and walnuts. Flax oil taken with a meal can actually increase the nutritional value of other foods. Flax seed is 57% omega 3 and 14% omega 6, making it the oil of choice for dressing salads and vegetables. However, due to its high omega 3 content, do not use this oil for cooking.

Olive oil is a monounsaturated fat that has been seen to have many health benefits particularly for cardiovascular health. It is also important for weight management and improving blood sugar balance. It makes a great alternative to saturated fat. Extra virgin olive oil, from the first pressing of the olives, contains higher levels of antioxidants and it is less processed which again makes it a great choice.

Finally, although it is certainly true that fat does decrease the GI of foods to make us feel fuller and is able to stabilise blood sugar, we must remember that saturated fat becomes a lethal cocktail when combined with sugar!! Furthermore, saturated fat is still believed to have some major health implications and with the benefits of monounsaturated fats such as olive oil and omega 6 and 3, we already have plenty of choice. We are not suggesting that you avoid this fat but do keep it to a minimum using small amounts perhaps found in a scrape of butter, lean red meat or natural yoghurt

WATER

Your body is made up of two-thirds water, so water intake is vital for all bodily functions. Dehydration is a sure way to gain weight so make sure you drink 1.5ltr – 2.5litres per day especially when exercising. Aim to drink filtered water rather than tap. Warm Water and ginger is a great morning wake up boosting metabolism. In fact warm water throughout the day is also a great choice

WHEAT

Gluten is the protein found mainly in wheat products, but also often added to sauces and processed foods. For many people gluten has become a source of intolerance, often people report finding gluten hard to digest leaving them feeling bloated, lethargic and unfocused. In the brain, gluten can act like an opiate, stimulating the production of endorphins. This can help us feel comforted initially contributing to an 'addictive' sensation which in turn can alter blood sugar and mood.

Wheat is probably the most problematic of the gluten-containing grains found in bread, pasta, and couscous. Many people can digest gluten in small amounts as found in oats, barley, rye, spelt and kamut but have more problems with the large amounts of gluten found in standard wheat which has been highly hybridised in the UK.

Signs and symptoms of possible gluten intolerance include:

- feeling tired and heavy after eating foods such as bread and pasta
- low energy levels
- excessive need for caffeine, nicotine and other stimulants
- Continuing to feel hungry and carrying on eating even after big meals, craving sweets after a meal containing high levels of gluten (e.g. pasta/bread) in order to get sugar into the blood and provide a lift
- Constipation and diarrhoea or both plus a distended abdomen, bloating and wind.

Cut out all wheat products for the duration of this plan. If you find your oatmeal is causing you to bloat just below the belly button, then we also recommend that you swap to gluten free oats.

DAIRY

Reduce your intake of dairy products – these can be inflammatory and may be high in hormone residues; do you really need any form of milk in your diet? The best-tolerated dairy products are natural yogurt and butter, but remember butter is high in saturated fats (pro – inflammatory) and should be used only in small amounts with preference given to olive oil and flaxseeds. Live natural yogurt 2% fat and above, ideally containing live culture (probiotics) can be eaten during this plan. Great alternatives to dairy yogurt are organic natural full fat sheep or goat's milk yogurt.

FIBRE

A diet containing fibre is essential for a healthy colon and helping rid us of harmful toxins. Great forms of fibre on this plan to be consumed in small portions include brown rice, oats, rye; legumes such as lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans and flaxseeds. These can be sprinkled on salads, oatmeal and yogurt, berries (low GI and high fibre), and of course plenty of vegetables.

FISH

Fish is certainly a fantastic protein source and oily fish in particular, delivers a good supply of omega 3. Unfortunately, certain fish are now more toxic including swordfish, tuna and farmed salmon. You can still eat these fish but keep portions to twice a week and choose other oily fish such as mackerel, wild salmon (higher in omega 3), herrings, trout, and sardines. It is worth noting halibut and cod have a small but significant amount of omega 3.

FRUIT

Fruits are an excellent source of essential vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and phytochemical such as flavonoids and ellagic acid (powerful antioxidants useful in the prevention of cancer). Unfortunately they can also be extremely high in sugar and therefore, need to be balanced with a little protein and fat to decrease their impact on blood sugar. If the goal is fat loss, then it is best to stick to low GI fruits such as berries (pomegranates, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, strawberries) apples, pears and peaches. Increase your intake of green leafy vegetables such as kale, spinach, cabbage, broccoli along with onions, alfalfa sprouts, peppers and avoid potatoes, squash, parsnips, turnip, cooked carrots and swede.

After the four week plan, reintroduce fruits you love but try to avoid melon after meals as this can lend to bloating – melon is always best kept alone and before a meal. Remember not to use sweet fruits as a meal replacement as they are likely to stimulate appetite due to their high sugar content – adding a little protein always helps.

SOY

Due to the hormonal impact of soy on the body, avoid processed soy products and limit natural soy foods to one serving per day.

THE FOUR-WEEK PLAN

If you want to succeed in losing weight and feeling better, then you will need to commit to the Programme. It may feel a little tough at first, but all we are suggesting is that you choose good quality nutritious foods, eat regular meals including your two snacks, include some protein and fat (especially essential fats) each time you eat, eat less at night and cut the toxic rubbish out of your diet. The result is you will certainly feel better, look healthier and probably never touch a processed meal or sticky bun again

SUPPLEMENTS

Firstly the key is to eat a healthy diet free from additives, preservatives and added ingredients that are not natural. Supplements can be important for individuals struggling to manage blood sugar and cravings or suffering from prolonged stress. We have included three supplements that are certainly not essential to the plan, but if you are struggling with sugar cravings or not able to get enough omega 3 in the diet, then the following three nutrients may be useful to you:

Chromium is an essential mineral which aids the ability of insulin to decrease blood sugar, and therefore can help control cravings. Not surprisingly, the body's chromium content may be reduced by diets high in simple sugars (comprising more than 35% of calories) and increase stress. Dietary intakes of chromium cannot be reliably determined because agricultural and manufacturing processes substantially affect the content of the mineral in foods. Furthermore, determining the chromium content of foods is problematic due to inadequate analytical tools.

Chromium in the polynicotinate form combines vitamin b3 also essential in controlling blood sugar. Supplement doses typically range from 100 to 200 ug.

Glutamine is an essential amino acid that has been proven to help decrease sugar cravings. The most convenient way to take this is by emptying one capsule into a little water and sipping between meals. Capsules doses – 500mg.

Omega 3 – Getting enough omega 3 is also vital for a healthy body. It is found mainly in oily fish and flaxseed and to a far lesser extent in linseeds, walnuts, hemp seeds and can be supplemented if you don't eat these foods on a regular basis. Ideal intake is 500mg but be careful to choose a brand that is certificated free from heavy metal contamination and is sold in a dark glass.

Organic – If possible, choose organic meats from free-range or wild animals since these meats will not only have less fat, but the fat they contain will have a much larger percentage of beneficial omega-3 fatty acids. Conventionally raised animals are fed grain-based diets, which result in their meat containing much more saturated and omega 6 fats and virtually no omega 3 fats. Organic food is known to contain 50% more nutrients, minerals and vitamins than produce that has been intensively farmed.

IN SHORT TO SUCCEED YOU NEED TO COMMIT TO THE FOLLOWING:

Avoid alcohol

Limit caffeine ideally only consuming green tea in moderation and under no circumstances drink coffee laden with milk or soya milk.

Eat protein and a little natural fat with every meal and snack.

Don't count calories.

Never skip breakfast.

Eat regular small meals

Eat essential fats, omega 6 and 3 but especially omega 3's whilst limiting saturated fats.

Chew your food and take time to eat.

Eliminate all refined sugars, junk food, and processed foods.

Eliminate all diet foods and very low fat foods and artificial sweeteners.

Make 50% of carbohydrate choices vegetables avoiding root vegetables.

Make vegetables your main means of getting your 5 or hopefully more portions a day.

Decrease fruit (during the first four weeks) sticking to low GI choices served with protein in small amounts. 1-2 pieces a day.

Change the way you think about food – food is your medicine and what you put in will determine how you perform and feel.

Get enough sleep if you want to manage your weight.

Aim to drink at least 2 litres of water a day, ideally filtered.

MINIMISE/ELIMINATE:

All processed and artificial foods

Sugar and refined foods

Wheat

Fried foods

Fizzy drinks

Diet foods and very low fat foods

Artificial sweeteners

Excess salt

Sugar and honey

Simple carbs – cakes, biscuits, croissants, along with fruit juices and dried fruits

Dairy products such as milk, cream, ice cream and, for the first four weeks, cheese (in moderation thereafter)

White potatoes and for purpose of four week plan sweet potatoes

INCREASE:

Organic food

Natural foods

Water

Vegetables (but not root)

Essential fats, omega 6 and especially omega 3 whilst keeping an eye on saturated fat

Sleep, (aim for your 8 hrs)

Exercise (talk to us to see if you are doing enough or too much)

Frequent meal 2.5-3 hours

Chew your food and focus on what you are eating

Boiling, baking, steaming or grilling fish and meat

Spices such as turmeric, cinnamon, ginger, bay leaves, garlic

ABSOLUTLY ESSENTIAL TO THE PLAN

FAT LOSS

If you want to lose weight then we recommend at least 50% of your diet should come from vegetable sources. You should also eat a small amount of fruit in the form of berries. During the four-week plan, stick to vegetables avoiding starch based potatoes, parsnips, cooked carrots and turnips. Also take out fruits other than berries. These will provide you with a good source of energy, fibre, vitamins and minerals. Vegetables and berries are also mainly alkaline forming which helps to maintain the body's natural blood pH believed to help decrease the risk of disease and in particular, Osteoporosis by helping to maintain bone mineral content.

A small amount of your diet will come from wheat free grains such as quinoa, oats, rye taken at breakfast and snacks although these should not be eaten after 6pm. The rest of your diet must include proteins such as fish, chicken, tofu, eggs, nuts and seeds and sprouted pulses. Cooked pulses are a mixture of complex carbohydrates, protein and fibre and can be eaten in smaller amounts during the day. Fats take care of themselves, intrinsically present in nuts, seeds, avocados, meat but if you are not taking flaxseed oil or eating oily fish, you need to readdress this to get enough Omega 3.

PORTION CONTROL

In the beginning you may need to look at the amount you eat. It is difficult to judge portion control in modern times but here are some simple guidelines to help you.

Protein should be about the size and thickness of the palm of your hand. For example, this would be approximately 125–150g of chicken breast, or salmon or half a block of tofu. Or if you are performing a lot of exercise your fish and meat portions can be closer to 175–200g (full stretched hand).

Carbohydrate depends upon the type of carbohydrate (grain or vegetable). A serving of grains, rice, oats or quinoa should be no more than a tight fist whilst rye bread, oatcakes should equal no more than 2 thin slices the size and width of your palm. If you are prone to water retention, these carbs are best avoided after 6pm.

Vegetables can be equal to two loosely held fists, but remember go for green vegetables over root vegetables.

Oils or nut oil such as flax, olive, pumpkin, or walnut oil. If you put your thumb and index finger together to make a circle. As for butter aim to always use sparingly.

Alcohol: If you are serious about succeeding then don't drink alcohol during the four weeks and seriously limit your intake thereafter. Remember alcohol is a useless calorie that will disrupt blood sugar and inevitably increase appetite often for sugary carbs and fried fatty foods. Furthermore it won't do much for your energy and mood the next day!! The commitment will be worth it!!

Eating regular meals every 2.5–3 hours will help you to manage your blood sugar level and avoid overeating later in the day.

Ingredients Eat Foods that are fresh and contain natural ingredients with names you recognise! If it has a long shelf life, don't touch it! Junk is out along with any products marketed as diet foods.

Fruit remember although fruit is an excellent source of many vitamins and minerals, it can also be high in sugar. During the plan, we recommend you avoid tropical fruits (often the highest in sugar) and stick to berries in moderation (ideally one punnet a day served at breakfast or as a snack with a little protein), which are the lowest in sugar and contain beneficial antioxidants. One apple, pear or peach with 4–6 nuts (to balance sugar impact) can also be used as a snack.

Carbohydrates – It is important to understand that our bodies definitely do need some carbohydrate, which helps to keep the colon healthy and provide an important form of energy – but probably less than you think! When you regularly eat a large amount of carbohydrate and not enough protein and essential fat, then you not only constantly feel hungry but also you tend to store more fat.

Choose wheat-free carbs such as wholegrain rice, quinoa, rye and soba noodles (made from buckwheat), oats (gluten free if you feel oats don't agree with you) whilst avoiding "starchy carbs" such as bread made from wheat and potatoes if you really want to see noticeable fat loss. Vital to the plan is to aim for fist-size portions, instead of a bowl-size.

Remember – The very best carbohydrates you can eat (if your goal is fat loss and increased energy) are low-starch carbohydrates – i.e. vegetables!

CHEW AND TAKE TIME TO EAT

Chewing is essential for good digestion and absorption and reducing bloating, gas and indigestion. Ideally, you should aim to chew each mouthful 20–30 times. Concentrate and enjoy each meal rather than rushing or focusing on other things at the same time, which is likely to lead to overeating. Pause between mouthfuls to allow the body time to realise what is being eaten and stop eating when you start to feel full. Remember if you put so much effort into changing your diet then take the time to get the best value you can from good nutrition.

MEAL IDEAS

BREAKFAST

Breakfast is essential and there is no question about it ,having breakfast will support healthy fat loss and metabolism.

Always eat breakfast! Even if you don't feel hungry, you have effectively fasted for up to 12 hours overnight, and you need to restock your immediate energy supply. Don't expect to feel great settling for skinny latte (full of milk sugars and caffeine) and a muffin. Look after yourself properly and make the right choices!

Ideally your breakfast should contain some complex carbohydrates such as oats, quinoa, rye bread along with a little fat and some protein which both help to support blood sugar balance and sustain your energy longer. During the four weeks avoid wheat. There are some great alternatives available such as Terence Stamp and the Village Bakery breads along with German rye or pumpernickel breads. Also gluten free oats are now widely available.

GREAT BREAKFAST CHOICES:

Salmon with a chopped raw vegetable salad and nuts.

Chicken with avocado and tomato salad.

Porridge made with either jumbo oats or even better dehulled oat flakes (slightly lower GI) made with water. Adding a tablespoon of mixed seeds will help lower the GI load of the oats and provide some protein and essential fat to the meal. You can add 2-heaped tablespoons of 2% or full fat Greek yogurt or sheep or goat's yogurt and a sprinkle of cinnamon on top. Cinnamon has been suggested to be useful in helping to lower blood glucose levels and is great added to oatmeal or try Yogi tea ranges.

2 small slices (palm size) toasted rye/or pumpernickel bread with thinly spread coconut oil, 2 tablespoons hummus or 2 tablespoons nut butter.

2 boiled/scrambled eggs (or 1 whole egg and 2 whites or up to 5 egg whites) with 2 small slices of rye, pumpernickel toast or two oatcakes. Serve with some vegetables such as asparagus, mushrooms, spinach or tomatoes.

You can add 50g of smoked salmon or lean meat to further boost protein intake and omega 3's.

2 poached eggs, with vegetables of choice (good ideas include asparagus, tomatoes, mushrooms and spinach). Serve on one to two small pieces of rye bread.

Fresh berries with 2% or full fat Greek, (125- 50g), 2 tablespoons of oat bran or rice bran and one heaped tablespoon of mixed seeds. The total 2% fat Greek yogurt is high in protein 8.2 8g per 100g with a moderate amount of fat and a low carbohydrate making it a great choice. There are some good organic ranges in the supermarkets. Alternatives: full fat sheep or goat's yogurt, which is often better tolerated.

For an apple and avocado breakfast – cover one large apple with half a sliced, ripe organic avocado, topped with a little lime juice and add 2-4 tablespoons of natural live 2% fat or full fat yogurt, Add 1 tablespoon of mixed seeds or a tablespoon of chopped almonds.

MID-MORNING SNACK

You need something with a low GI (ie a slow-release of energy).

50g chicken and lettuce leaves

A slice of rye bread or pumpernickel bread or 2 rye crackers or 2 rough cut oatcakes with some celery and cucumber slices with a small portion of hummus (1 tablespoons)

2 tablespoons of hummus with chopped raw vegetables

A piece of fruit and not more than five to six nuts or 2 brazils. Best fruit choices are pears, apples, peaches, 2 small plums or or 125 – 150g of berries

Small handful of unsalted almonds, cashews, brazil or walnuts

A Greek 2% or full fat natural yogurt or full fat sheep or goats' yogurt 125g

2 rough cut oatcakes or rice cakes or rye crackers and a thin spread of nut butter (note rice cakes have a high GI and must always be served with protein).

Half an avocado and one oatcake if desired or a couple of Brazil nuts

LUNCH

If you have had breakfast and a snack then you will be able to keep this meal small but nutritious. The choices below are all healthy:

Sashimi seaweed, salad and a small miso soup – sashimi is a great source of omega 3 oils and ideal with some fresh seaweed. Be careful not to eat salmon, tuna and swordfish more than 3 times a week. Remember miso soup is high in salt so avoid any other extra salt during the day.

Palm size portion of grilled fish, chicken or turkey (or 100–150g) or half a pack of tofu or 2 eggs with a mixed green salad and half an avocado (if desired). You can add a 2–3 of heaped tablespoons of lentils, kidney beans or chickpeas to this meal (high in fibre and a low GI) or 2–3 heaped tablespoons of brown rice or quinoa or soba noodles with a few pumpkin seeds and a little olive or flaxseed oil to decrease their GI. (Soba noodles are made from buckwheat, which is not wheat of any sort, and is an excellent plant protein containing all 8 essential amino acids.

Tuna (drained tin around 100–110g) with 2 tablespoon mixed kidney beans and chickpeas, mixed salad with teaspoon olive oil.

Boiled eggs with avocado and mixed salad.

Grilled tuna or chicken or half a pack tofu with lots of green vegetables such as spinach, asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, kale or green beans, and leeks are all excellent choices. This can be serving with a crisp green salad. Feel free to add a small amount of olive, hemp or flaxseed oil.

Chicken or tofu, nut and avocado salad.

Soup (ideally chunky vegetable or bean or clear broth with chicken). It would be best to have a small side salad with this, which can include a little protein such as chicken, prawns, avocado (or you could save this protein side salad for a snack later). Avoid the wheat free bread with soups.

40g hummus, half an avocado, 2–4 tablespoons of quinoa (use quinoa recipes) or 2–3 tablespoons brown rice and with lots of colourful, raw vegetables and olive oil or flax oil.

Salmon or grilled tuna salad with 1 egg (if desired) and mixed leaves and green beans served with 1–2 teaspoons of olive oil or flaxseed oil.

Avocado (half) with mixed sprouted beans (mung beans, aduki beans, lentils or chickpea sprouts – all high in protein, enzymes, vitamins and minerals) and a large mixed salad with flaxseed or olive oil.

Omelette either made with two eggs or 1 egg and 3–5 egg whites choose lean protein fillings such as salmon, turkey, or mixed chopped vegetables (such as peppers, courgettes, onion). Serve with a mixed leaf salad.

Tuna salad with green beans, mixed leaves and 2 tablespoons of mixed pulses served with 1 tablespoon of ideally flaxseed oil.

Stir-fry prawns/chicken/ tofu with vegetables.

Mackerel salad. With 2-heaped tablespoons mixed sprouted beans and mixed raw cabbage, beetroot and salad leaves. Olive oil or flax oil to dress (1–2 teaspoons).

Great salad vegetable choices: mixed leaves, spinach, grated cabbage, grated beetroot, alfalfa sprouts, artichoke, watercress, rocket, cucumber.

MID-AFTERNOON SNACK

This should be similar to the mid-morning snack. Remember it is just a snack!

Half an avocado and small handful prawns

50–75g turkey and lettuce leaves

1 apple or pear and 2 large nuts or 4–6 max smaller nuts

Raw vegetables 25g hummus

Small handful unsalted nuts

Punnet of berries and tablespoon seeds

Edamame beans pot as brought from a Japanese restaurant (don't add salt)

2 rice cakes and two slices of turkey or tablespoon nut butter – remember rice cakes have a high GI so make sure you serve protein with them or you could end up eating the pack!

A Greek 2% or full fat natural yogurt or full fat sheep or goats yogurt 125g.

Whey protein shake made with water and 100g frozen berries

100g coconut yogurt

DINNER

This is often the one meal of the day where people really let go and end up overeating. If you are out to dinner, avoiding the bread with the meal, you simply don't need all that carbohydrate (unless you're training for a marathon!). If you do feel exhausted and in need of a lift at dinner, then look back at your day's eating – it is vital to enjoy breakfast, lunch and two small snacks throughout the day. Instead of choosing pasta, rice, potatoes, bread and all the starchy carbs, order steamed vegetables and salad to fill-up on instead – but go easy so you don't feel bloated – the digestive system still have to process the meal.

GREAT DINNER CHOICES:

A choice of Grilled sardines, fillet steak, tofu, salmon, tuna, white fish, chicken, turkey, venison, served with 3-4 vegetables coated with a little olive or flaxseed oil. You can also enjoy a mixed green salad with this,

Ideal vegetable choices: broccoli, asparagus, leeks, onions, courgettes, green beans, sugar snaps, mung bean, spinach, kale, cabbage cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, mushrooms.

Ideal salad: all lettuces, leaves, spinach, red or white cabbage, grated beetroot, tomatoes, watercress, rocket, alfalfa, chard, fennel, and cucumber.

Scrambled eggs with smoked salmon and vegetables of choice.

Tofu and vegetable kebabs serve with green salad

Oven baked halibut or cod with a basil garlic lemon rub

Stir-fry vegetables with chicken, prawns or tofu.

Salmon and monkfish kebabs – add peppers, onions and courgettes to kebab and serve with mixed salad.

Grilled sea bass on bed of spinach and grilled cherry tomatoes.

If you crave red meat, buy yourself a really good quality piece of fillet steak and grill this. Serve with a large mixed salad or plenty of steamed mixed vegetables.

FLUID

Mineral water or warm water or Hot water and ginger

Yogi spice teas are great for digestion and metabolism. Cinnamon tea to help blood sugar control

Dandelion or nettle tea is excellent for detoxing.

Camomile or Peppermint is very soothing on the stomach and good for digestion (camomile also for sleep along with sleep mixes)

Green tea (caffeinated) in moderation – high in antioxidants but also reasonably high in caffeine so switch to decaf or herbal tea after 2pm. Green tea contains high levels of flavonoids called catechins that can aid weight loss as well as being cancer and cardio protective.

FINAL NOTES

Food is our energy. The diversity of foods available for us to enjoy is amazing, so we really owe it to ourselves to care about what we put in our mouths! Put good food into your body and you will feel the benefits. We care so much about how we look, how we dress, how much we weigh and how we are feeling, we should care more about how we eat. This is the one thing that affects all others. If you want to feel full of life and be truly well, look at what you eat and drink and make the right choice. The more often you do this, the easier it will become and the better you will feel.

Written by Christina Howells for That Girl™