

Preparing from WITHIN

What all brides should know about using nutrition to gear up for the big day...

Why not do something different for your wedding? Why not treat your body to a pampering? And I'm not just talking about massages, facials, and waxing. Why not pamper your body by taking care of your internal organs and allowing them to perform better; taking care of your body and mind in order to be prepared for the emotional and physical stress often involved in wedding preparation.

It seems rare that a bride-to-be would see a nutritionist before her wedding, but that may prove to be very beneficial in many ways. In my short, often rushed encounters with brides-to-be, I found some recurring questions. The brief solutions I offered them might also help you during the countdown to your wedding.

Q: My skin is reacting; I'm not sure if it's my hormones or stress, or the combination of the two; do you have any quick solutions?

Nutrition Quick Fix:

- Stop all dairy products. If you can't cut them out, then do it gradually. Dairy products, including milk, cheese, and butter, are directly related to skin problems and avoiding them often has a tremendous effect on the quality of skin.
- Stop or significantly reduce caffeine (from coffee, tea, and fizzy drinks). Caffeine dehydrates the skin and makes it more likely to break out. It also depletes minerals that are crucial for skin health such as zinc.
- Avoid all citrus fruits, whether eaten raw or as juice, including lemon, lime, orange, grapefruit, etc. These fruits can exacerbate skin conditions and add to inflammation and sensitivity of the skin.
- Avoid saturated fats from fried foods, fatty meats, and rich desserts. These fats clog up the pores and add to skin flar-ups
- Sugars and refined foods should be kept to a minimum. These include all chocolates and desserts, and white products such as white rice, white bread, and pastries. Refined foods and sugars utilise important nutrients for their own metabolism and often leave the skin short of its nourishment.
- Avoid smoking and smoky environments. Smoking adds to the body's toxicity levels which are often manifested in the skin for excretion. Smoking also sometimes gives the skin a grayish colour.
- Water is one of the most important elements in skin health. It rehydrates skin cells and gives it its much needed moisture. Try to aim for about 1.5 litres/day.
- Essential fats from nuts, seeds, and their oils, are crucial to skin health. They moisturise the skin from the inside and help eliminate any spots or scars. Have a handful of nuts and seeds each day, or two tablespoons of cold flaxseed oil.
- Fibre is important for ridding the body of toxins that can sometimes be excreted through the skin in the form of pimples. Fibre comes from wholegrains such as brown rice and brown bread, and also from beans, pulses, fruits and vegetables.
- Protein is responsible for skin regeneration. It helps the body shed old skin cells and create new ones. Protein, from sources such as meat, chicken, fish, and beans, is important on a daily basis.
- Plenty of fruits and vegetables are also important for skin health. For example, vitamin C is crucial for skin problems, as well as vitamin A, derived from foods rich in Beta Carotene. Aim for 3-5 fruits and vegetables each day, and include coloured, bright, and dark green variations.

Q: I'm so stressed, I keep breaking down and crying at the slightest argument or problem. I'm not usually like this, but I just can't seem to stop crying. Is there anything I can do?

Nutrition Quick Fix:

- Stress is very often accompanied by depression, and the two most important nutrients for depression are essential fats and zinc. Essential fats come from nuts and seeds, and their oils (as mentioned above), and zinc comes from seafood and seeds, for example pumpkin seeds.
- Protein is also essential to make stress hormones, to help deal with any stressful situation. So remember to always add protein to your meal, be it fish, chicken, or even beans and lentils.
- Include plenty of wholegrains (such as brown rice, rye bread, etc.) and green leafy vegetables in your diet. These foods are rich in B vitamins, which play a major role in stress and mood. These foods are also rich in Magnesium, which is the calming nutrient that is often needed in times of stress.
- Vitamin C is involved in making stress hormones, so we need and utilise more of it when under stress. Fruits, vegetables, and dark green salads are all good sources of vitamin C.
- Take time to de-stress. Stress management is just as important as diet in times of stress. Methods of stress management depend on the individual and may include massage, hot baths, listening to music, meditation, exercise, prayer, etc. Find what suits you and spend 10-15 minutes each day to de-stress.

Q: I thought I'd lose a few more kilos before the wedding, but I just can't! I've tried so many diets, and I've even tried starving myself for a few days but nothing worked. Now the wedding is so close and I'm afraid I might look like I'm popping out of my dress. Help!

Nutrition Quick Fix:

- Have more frequent meals and snacks. Regular eating increases metabolism and helps weight loss. Do not skip meals and do not starve yourself.
- Avoid eating starchy food at your evening meal. Starchy foods include grains (bread, cereal, rice, etc.), and starchy vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, beetroots, pumpkin, etc.
- Avoid sugars and refined (white) products as much as possible, as any excess sugar in the blood that is not used as energy, is stored in your fat deposits.
- Avoid fried foods, junk foods, any visible fat on steaks, and desserts, etc. This form of fat is saturated and goes directly to your fat stores, which adds to weight.
- Eat more nuts and seeds and their oils to add to the body's intake of essential fats, which actually replace saturated fats in the body and help weight loss.
- Fibre is very important to rid the body of any extra fat. Fill your diet with wholegrains, beans, lentils, fruits, vegetables, and salads.
- Try to limit foods that are eaten too frequently. Excess intake of any food can trigger a food sensitivity, which can cause water retention and weight gain, among other things. Most common food sensitivity triggers include wheat and dairy products.
- Dehydration can also cause water retention. Try to avoid dehydration by drinking plenty of water and avoiding dehydrating foods and drinks such as salty foods and caffeine.
- Exercise is also crucial for weight loss. Regular, moderate resistance training is the best solution. Try to maintain 30 minutes of light workout, three times a week.

Note:

It is very beneficial to take a quality Multivitamin/mineral supplement on a daily basis in order to obtain the minimum level of nutrients required to prevent undesirable symptoms and general ill health. You can also take a 'stress formula' with your multi during stressful periods. Just make sure the stress formula includes vitamin B6 and Magnesium as part of the ingredients.

It's not just about how you look on the night, it's about how you FEEL. And if you implement this advice and FEEL good on your wedding and during the days or weeks leading up to your wedding, why not continue making the right food choices? I guarantee you won't regret it.

Alia Almoayed is a Nutritional Therapist running a busy nutrition consultancy in Bahrain, offering nutrition advice to the whole Middle East community. She writes health articles for various publications, holds lectures and seminars on health and nutrition, runs a weekly live radio health programme, and heads a number of weight loss projects. Alia is the author of *I Want Healthy Kids*, a book on how to raise healthy kids, and *The Dream Body Eating Plan*, a weight loss guide; she is also co-author of *101 Ways To Improve Your Health*. For more information, to book appointments, to get regular email health tips, or to request Alia's special FREE Report entitled: *5 Secrets Your Doctor Won't Tell You About Your Health*, visit www.AliaAlmoayed.com.