

Slim Down for Spring the Healthy Way

Written by Claire Perkins

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There's nothing worse for your body than slamming on the brakes a week before a pool party or vacation- crash dieting is potentially harmful and can slow your metabolism in the long-run. Megan McNamee, an Arizona nutrition and dietitian extraordinaire, gave AZFoothills.com tips on how to eat healthfully and slim down the healthy way- so we can enjoy our new two-piece *and* lunch.



Explain your nutrition and exercise philosophies.

I believe that eating healthful, satisfying foods is one of the most important ways we can protect our health and live optimally. Nutrition and exercise go hand-and-hand – we can't expect to achieve maximum benefit from any fitness program without adjusting our food and eating thoughts and behaviors. Unlike most quick-fix diets, my approach is different than what many people have tried before. I don't advocate dieting, deprivation, or eating fake food to reach temporary results that cannot be sustained. I believe that it's not just what we eat, but also how we eat, that determines how successful we are in changing our bodies and health.

What are some mistakes women make when getting ready for bikini season?

So many women tackle big changes all at once but can't seem to sustain new behaviors. If you want to change your diet, pick one thing to work on, such as eating a healthy breakfast, and do it for a week or two. If it becomes a habit that sticks, move onto the next challenge. Small steps are much more effective because they are sustainable in the long run. Additionally, don't forget to pack healthy snacks for work or play, such as fresh fruit and nuts or cut up veggies and hummus. My clients often make poor choices – or worse, skip a snack and get too hungry – when they don't have options.

What should people be doing to get ready for warm weather?

Spring is great time to take advantage of fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season and locally grown. Try adding strawberries to a spinach salad, or use a new or unfamiliar vegetable, such as mustard greens sautéed with olive oil, garlic, and walnuts, to fill half of your dinner plate. Vegetables and fruits have a high water content that help you feel full, enhance hydration, and may improve the look of your skin. Check out your local farmer's market, which is usually open until May in most Arizona cities, for beautiful, locally grown produce.

What happens to your body when you crash diet?

Many women think that crash diets are the way to go. Whenever you stop listening to your hunger and fullness cues by going on a restrictive diet, your body tends to rebel because it feels as if it is starving. Eventually, when you go off the diet because you're simply too hungry or too unsatisfied, you may end up at a higher weight than where you started because your metabolism has slowed. The best way to reach a healthy weight is to eat when you're hungry, stop when you're comfortably full, eat healthful foods that you truly enjoy most of the time, and eat slowly and mindfully.

Wait! There's more. Keep reading...



Can you share a day in the life of a super-healthy eater? What would you recommend for breakfast, lunch and dinner?

I reach for minimally processed foods that are satisfying, healthy, and easy to prepare. Aim for organic foods- especially meats and dairy- whenever possible. Here is an example of a healthy, delicious day-long menu:

Breakfast

Sprouted grain toast topped with raw almond butter and smashed organic raspberries
Kombucha drink

Lunch

Salad made of organic micro greens, tomatoes, onions, goat cheese, and olive-oil based dressing
Lentil soup
Ginger tea

Snack

Raw fruit and nut bar (such as Lara brand)

Dinner

Wild crusted salmon

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Baked asparagus with shaved organic Parmesan cheese
Quinoa

Dessert

Organic apple with cinnamon or small piece of dark chocolate

What are some foods you typically avoid and why?

I usually stay clear soy because most of the soy grown in this country is genetically modified, and some studies have linked soy to thyroid dysfunction. Additionally, I avoid hydrogenated oils, enriched flours, and processed foods as much as possible. I recommend that my clients stay "close to the plant" – in other words, try avoiding foods that have gone through a lot of processing to get to your plate.

What are your thoughts on cleanses and Hollywood diet crazes?

Certain cleanses and diets have some redeeming qualities, but any time we severely restrict the foods we eat for weight loss, we set ourselves up for failure. Our bodies tell us how much to eat with hunger and fullness. It's our job to honor these signals and by feeding ourselves satisfying, healthy foods and paying attention as we're eating.



More about Megan McNamee, MPH, RD

Megan is a Registered Dietitian and nutrition expert. Using a gentle approach that honors each person's experience, preferences, and life situation, Megan helps her clients reach their own goals in a safe and manageable way. Aside from seeing private clients, she has worked in teaching, research, corporate wellness, and public health, and she currently works full-time as the Training and Wellness Manager and Clinical Coordinator for a medical device company in Scottsdale, Arizona. She also consults with a variety of corporate groups and wellness companies. Megan's passions lie in understanding why we do what we do and how to change destructive or health depleting behaviors. She received her Master's in Public Health, Preventive Nutrition at the University of Southern California. Contact Megan for individual or group sessions at megan.mcnamee.rd@gmail.com or 480-510-9634.