



On food

According to Dr Arien van der Merwe, a specialist in well-being, health and stress management, your body needs optimal nutrition to be able to handle the increased metabolic demands of exercise. 'A balanced diet ensures quick recovery after exercise and more energy to persist with the regime.'

Furthermore, your body also needs an increased amount of vitamins and minerals when exercising, so you'll need to get this from the food you eat, says Bronwen de Klerk, owner of iLove Food (www.ilovefood.co.za).

Use your resources

For more information, visit www.healthstresswellness.com. For Riekie, this site proved invaluable.

What the experts say

On food allergies and intolerances

Dr Van der Merwe points out that food allergies can drain energy resources and prevent proper digestive processes. It's important to identify these and make the necessary changes to ensure that your body functions at its best.

'Eating foods we are intolerant of can cause various symptoms, including bloating, headaches and fatigue,' says Bronwen. 'When you feel like this, you certainly won't feel like exercising and are likely to eat more to try to feel better.'

Cutting out these foods can alleviate undesired gastro-intestinal responses and eliminate possible discomfort during exercise, explains dietitian Claudia Lilje. 'By promoting unhindered digestion, you can also utilise micro- and macronutrients in food more efficiently, which will provide you with more energy.'

On exercise

Start by doing something you really enjoy, even if it's just for 10 to 15 minutes a day, says Dr Van der Merwe. 'Try walking, belly dancing, yoga or t'ai chi – they're excellent "all rounders" for a full-body workout that's enjoyable and will keep you fit and energised.'

Claudia adds: 'Exercise should be done in moderation and be suitable for your gender, age, genetics and lifestyle. Don't forget that in some instances, too much of a good thing can be a bad thing.'



ON ENERGY

'Energy balance is the key factor in a healthy lifestyle. The food and drink we consume shouldn't exceed the energy expended through activities of daily living and exercise,' says Claudia. Bronwen adds that low-GI foods are best for sustainable energy. 'You can find out more about them at www.gifoundation.com, but generally speaking, if you combine protein with a carbohydrate, it lowers the GI of the meal and causes the sugar to be released into the blood more steadily.'

Just a FEW SMALL CHANGES

Don't think crash diets and celery sticks. When it comes to your diet, a tweak here and there is all you need to do. Here are Claudia's top tips:

- Listen to your hunger cues
- Eat small meals every three hours to increase your metabolic rate
- Eat breakfast every morning
- Focus on low-GI foods
- Avoid refined carbohydrates
- Drink two to three litres of water every day
- Chew slowly and don't rush through meals
- Plan meals and have healthy food on hand
- Cut down on alcohol, which is just empty kilojoules. ■