

HEALTHY EATING IN YOUR 20'S

In your 20's you'll be working hard and playing hard. You've left university, you're starting a new job, you have (some) money in your pocket and although you love downing cocktails with your friends, you also want to get ahead at work. Between 70 hour work weeks, speed dating and late night happy hours, it's often hard to fit in a meal, let alone a healthy and balanced meal. Relying on convenience foods might seem like a good idea, but they'll lack many essential vitamins and minerals, and probably contain lots of sugar and fat (which is why they taste so good!). By pushing your body but not refilling it with good fuel, you just can't live up to your full potential.

So, what to do? We've put together some simple advice below to ensure that you can start eating your way to a fantastic future.

In a rush?

Convenience food isn't always bad. Look for microwave foods that are low in fat and sugar and which offer a good balance of protein, carbs and veggies all in one happy package. The labels should have this clearly displayed. In general, try to stay below 450 milligrams of sodium and no more than three grams of total fat and one gram of saturated fat per 100 calories.

Managing your cycle

Many women in their 20's have already been on the pill for some time but they don't realise that the pill that they started off with might not be right for them now. Considering it's something they put into their mouth nearly every day women give their contraceptive choice surprisingly little thought. However, not all pills are the same and some women can experience some side effects such as bloating, weight gain and increased acne. These side effects can often be reduced or avoided by changing the type of pill that you're on. There are many different types of pill to choose from so make sure you're happy with yours and if you're not speak to your doctor or healthcare professional.

Feeling low?

Often, when we get tired we reach out for a Coke or Red Bull to give us a lift. Although it may help initially, the feel-good effect quickly fades and drinking too many sugary drinks is a quick route to weight gain.

Likewise, foods that are high in sugar, such as chocolate, cakes, and biscuits, give your body an instant energy rush when you eat them. However, after the initial rush, your sugar levels will drop. As your sugar levels drop, so will your energy levels. As a result, you may find it more difficult to concentrate, or you may feel irritable, tired, and lethargic. As sugary foods are bad for your teeth and high in calories, you should eat them sparingly, as a special treat.

Vitamins and nutrients

It is important that your body gets the right amount of essential vitamins and nutrients in order for you to stay active. For example, if your body does not get enough iron, it can cause you to have a condition known as anaemia. This is where your red blood cells are unable to carry as much oxygen as normal to the organs and tissues in your body. As a result, it can leave you feeling faint, lethargic, and lacking in energy.

Make sure that you eat enough iron-rich foods, such as:

- red meat,
- green, leafy vegetables,
- pulses, and
- fortified breakfast cereals.

Regular meals

Eating at regular intervals, not skipping meals, and getting enough sleep, are good ways to help you maintain your energy levels. Choose foods that are digested slowly such as wholegrain rye bread, porridge, pasta, beans, lentils and noodles.

Caffeine

As well as eating a healthy balanced diet, it is also important to watch what you drink. Drinking too much caffeine - found in tea, coffee, and cola drinks - can leave you feeling anxious, irritable, and restless. Try cutting down on the amount of caffeine that you drink and instead, drink plenty of water.

For more information visit: www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/1862.aspx?CategoryID=51&SubCategoryID=164

RELATIONSHIP ASPIRATIONS ¹

Sex still the key to a strong and healthy relationship

We've made our resolutions, renewed gym memberships and started taking our first steps on to the career ladder. But what do we really want from our love and sex lives? Are women looking for equality and power, or loving mutually appreciative relationships? Is the idea of a permanent relationship outdated or something we all secretly aspire to?

We've asked over 800 women what they think about sex and relationships and more importantly sex in relationships and here's what we found out...

- Almost 40 % of women in their 20's and 30's sleep with someone by the third date
- On average, these women think about sex 192 times a year and contraception 68 times a year
- 87% said personality is the most important factor when choosing a partner
- Only 3% say sex is the most important factor
- 83% say their friends have an effect on their choice of partner
- 56 % say their partner would not be the person they are most comfortable chatting to about contraception
- Over a quarter of women say their friends are their main confidants when it comes to sex and contraception

TALKING ABOUT CONTRACEPTION...

That last thing we want to do is to sound like your mother, but if you've started seeing someone it's really important to make sure that you talk to him about safe sex. Of course this is sometimes easier said than done, particularly after a big night out and when things start to get passionate, so make sure you plan a time to talk to him and do it early on in the relationship. Remember, you're not just trying to avoid an unwanted pregnancy, you're also protecting yourself from Sexually Transmitted Infections. It'll be much easier to talk about safe sex at the beginning of a relationship than it is to bring it up six months down the line, after which it may be too late anyway.

So don't be shy. You will be doing both of you a favour by taking control of the situation and sorting it out. Chances are, he's wanted to have the same conversation but is too embarrassed!

Firstly, don't try to have this sort of conversation when you're about to tumble into bed: that could be a bit of passion killer! Instead pick your moment carefully and make sure that you won't be interrupted. If you're worried about talking about contraception out of context, don't be – it's perfectly normal to be talking about this. You can frame the conversation by saying that you're really into him and want to take the relationship further, but want to get contraception sorted out first.

Once you've planned when to have the conversation, have a quick think about what you want out of it. If you'd rather use condoms while you sort out your pill or other contraception then make that clear to him and be prepared to handle his objections, like "I don't enjoy sex with a condom". If you're worried about Sexually Transmitted Infections, you should consider going for a test together. Many couples do this and they find it helps to build trust and commitment.

Great sex is all about feeling comfortable and in control so make sure that you make decisions together about what works best for you both.

If you want more tips on talking to your partner about sex, try this link:

<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/talkingaboutsex/pages/talkingtoyourpartner.aspx>