



Top tips for this summer's bikini body by Dan Roach

So you've packed away your winter woolies for another year and dug out those strappy tops and summer skirts. You're sure those skinny jeans you wore last year must have shrunk in your wardrobe as they're pinching around the hips a bit more than they used to!

Approach your new healthier regime from 3 points; diet, exercise and lifestyle. By using this method you are ensuring that your body gets the best chance of being in the shape you want it to be in the time you want it.

Diet to many of us is a four letter word. So think of it more as an eating plan. Sensible eating as opposed to faddy diets will ensure that you lose weight and keep it off. Try to build sensible eating into your everyday life. Faddy diets will mess up your metabolism and make keeping weight off harder in the long run. Increasing your body's metabolism is key for getting in shape quicker and easier.

If you're struggling to cut the calories then why not try burning some instead. Cardiovascular exercise such as riding a bike, jogging and swimming not only burn off all those extra calories but also release endorphins in the body to make you feel good and increase your levels of fitness. Weight bearing exercise will increase your body's metabolism by increasing the amount of toned muscle you have in your body. This means more calories are burnt at rest so try to incorporate some weight bearing exercises into your lifestyle. Examples of good weight bearing exercises are hill walking, some heavy gardening or, if you can get to a health club, lifting weights.

By trying to make these all part of your lifestyle these can become permanent changes for life. They will help you make exercise part of your social routine and something you enjoy rather than dread. Healthy eating will become normal eating and the occasional glass of wine or takeaway can be seen as a treat rather than an excuse not to cook.

So if you're thinking of getting in shape for the beach, these top 5 tips for success will help you on your way. No need for cabbage soup or ridiculous exercise régimes, these easy tips offer realistic advice to help you to tone and shape those wobbly bits in time for the beach.

1. Try to minimize, processed foods. Cook from basic ingredients, making sure fruits and vegetables form the majority of your diet.

Remember, convenience foods that claim to be low fat can sometimes have surprisingly high levels of salt and sugar so read food labels carefully and don't be fooled by them – 95% fat free still has 5% fat!

2. Try to drink 2-3 liters of water each day – more if you are exercising. Keep sugary drinks, soft drinks, and alcoholic drinks to a minimum. These drinks add an enormous amount to empty calories, (calories with little or no nutritious value), and yet are often ignored. Thirst is frequently mistaken as hunger, so next time you think you need food, try drinking a glass of water and see if the feeling subsides.

3. Get as much informal exercise as you can – e. g. park in the space furthest from the office entrance; take the stairs instead of the lift; get off the bus one stop early and walk the last part of your journey; stand instead of sitting; carry your groceries instead of wheeling them in a trolley, carry watering cans to plants instead of hosing them.

4. Make exercise fun. If you are doing something you enjoy, you're much more likely to stick at it and you won't even notice how much work your doing. Invite friends to join in where possible, perhaps you could go for a walk with your friend instead of meeting for a coffee, or set up a weekly game of badminton with your neighbors.

5. Remember to treat yourself now and again. Buy yourself a new outfit once you get to that new dress size or reward yourself with a desert during that anniversary dinner out. Just remember that treats are rewards for working hard and attaining the targets you set out to achieve. A treat every other night or for not achieving results is no longer a treat but the start of a bad habit.

Remember, getting fit doesn't have to be an uphill struggle; it's a matter of choosing an approach that suits your personality and lifestyle then sticking to it.

Some of you will like structured diets with organized routines and group exercise while others will prefer to go it alone. Either way can work, the key is choosing a plan that right for you.