

Your bikini diet

Eating right need not involve starvation, writes BROOKE EVANS-BUTLER

Many of us launch into drastic diets soon after a frightening experience of trying on bathers.

But the experts say a healthy summertime diet need not be dramatic. Here are their tips:

CHOOSE A SMALL PLATE

Struggling to lose weight? You might be overdoing your portions because of the large size of your dinnerware, according to Dietitians Association of Australia spokesperson, Margaret Hays. "Buy smaller bowls, cups and plates and look how much food they hold," she advises. "Dinner plates are massive, so instead go for an entree plate for your main meal. For bowls, buy pretty, small bowls like Japanese bowls. Changing plate sizes allows you to instantly eat less food because if you put a small amount of food on a big plate, you automatically want more."

DRINK WATER

Even if you watch what you eat, you might be undoing all of your hard work simply with coffees, juices, milkshakes, energy drinks and alcohol, according to Ms Hays. "People forget to count the calories from their drinks but those can total all of your daily calorie count," warns Ms Hays.

She says water is best, with herbal teas also a good choice.

Keeping up your water intake is also very important, according to Simone Allen, dietitian and owner of Nutrition Works.

"Being well hydrated eliminates one potential reason for non-hungry eating," she explains.

"For example, when we're dehydrated we may

feel more fatigued and reach for a snack in an effort to boost our energy levels, when in fact drinking water to rehydrate may be just what we need."

How much water? "An indication of being well hydrated is that your urine colour upon waking is a straw to light yellow colour," she says.

DON'T SKIP SNACKS

Ms Hays says many women do not plan to snack during the day and consequently reach for high-calorie snacks, such as chocolate and chips, for quick pick-me-ups.

She recommends planning nutritious snacks, such as a piece of fruit or small smoothie. "Smart planning allows you to stay within your kilojoule allowance and feel full," she says.

GIVE FAD DIETS THE FLICK

"We all get tempted by the latest fads which promise the perfect beach body but if you do things like cut out food groups then you miss out on important nutrients," warns Ms Hays, who says restrictive diets are not sustainable or healthy.

She recommends eating a wide range of foods, following the Australian Dietary Guidelines, so you get to eat enjoyable, healthy food every day.

Dietitian Emily Eaton says basing decisions on food intake around bikini-body pressure is a common mistake. "Focus on enjoying nourishing foods which boost your energy levels, sharpen your concentration and strengthen your immunity," she advises.

"Let the weight management be a flow-on from this and you'll be able to have a positive relationship with

food and a healthy body image."

WHAT TO EAT

Simone Allen says if your nutrition needs an overhaul, focus on what you need to have daily.

She recommends:

- One serve of lean protein.
- Two different types of fruit.
- Three serves of low-fat dairy.
- Four different types of grains (not a lot, just small amounts of a variety of grains).
- Five different vegetables.

"By the time you fit this in, there is less room for low-nutrient, high-kilojoule foods," she says. "We find the frequency of foods such as chocolate, chips and biscuits decrease with this approach and the result is a consistently lower daily kilojoule intake and better weight management."

SLOW AND STEADY

If you're aiming to lose some weight for that new bikini, dietitians recommend taking it slowly but surely. "Dietitians recommend weight loss of about one to two kilos a month," says Margaret Hays. "We want weight loss that is sustainable."