

# Eat Right *with* Rouses

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**W**hen I was asked to write about brides and crash diets, I did a little Google search of the phrase, “wedding crash diet.” What came up were countless pages of forums, articles and group discussions on how to lose 10, 15 and even 20 pounds in a matter of weeks before the wedding day. Of course, fad diets were recommended; what was more surprising was the abundance of fellow brides and articles promoting colon cleanses, feeding tubes and even starvation to achieve the result of looking thin for the big day.

A Cornell University survey found that 70% of engaged-to-be-married women wanted to lose an average of 20 pounds before their wedding, which is well above the national average for women who want to lose weight. When it came to methods of losing weight, 40% of them employed at least one extreme measure, while 25% used two or more. This survey is now 10 years old, but I’m willing to bet a newer one would get similar results.

Most of us know crash diets are unhealthy. So, why is it acceptable under the guise of “shedding for the wedding?” Weddings are a wonderful celebration of love between two people, but what about self-love — the relationship between yourself and your body?

A large motivator of shedding for the wedding is (1) fitting into the perfect dress and (2) looking flawless in those wedding photos. Wedding photos may last forever, but so can the effects of a crash diet.

Here are my top reasons to forgo the crash diet and focus more on self-love, acceptance and realistic goals.

## THE BOUNCE-BACK

Your body has an amazing ability to adapt to change. When it’s significantly deprived of the calories it needs to perform daily functions, it enters a sort of “starvation mode,” conserving energy and breaking down some of your muscle for fuel. Losing weight doesn’t always equate to losing fat; a loss of lean muscle mass is most likely

to occur in a crash diet, which means your body isn’t burning as many calories as it once was. When the wedding is over and regular eating habits resume, you will likely gain back the weight, in addition to extra pounds, since your metabolism will have slowed down. This slower metabolism is something you may end up fighting for years to come.

## HORMONES GONE HAYWIRE

As if planning a wedding isn’t stressful enough, try planning a wedding while hangry. When your body isn’t getting enough fuel, it ramps up production of a hormone called ghrelin, which sends out hunger signals and increases your appetite — this is your body’s attempt to get itself some food. Furthermore, it decreases the production of leptin, the hormone responsible for stopping hunger. Cortisol levels may also increase, which correlates to increased stress. The lack of calories can also interfere with brain activity, causing even more irritability. Maybe Bridezilla just needs some food!

## WHAT’S MISSING

When the body is deprived of calories, it’s also deprived of the essential vitamins, minerals and macronutrients it needs to be healthy. Most likely, you won’t be getting enough protein, calcium, iron, fiber and other nutrients, which can wreak havoc on your body. For instance, when the body isn’t getting enough calcium, it starts taking it from the bones, which can be a major problem — especially in women, who are already more likely to experience osteoporosis. It can also impact the health of your skin and hair, which may not give you the glowing look you’re going for on your wedding day.

## FAINTING IN LOVE

When the wedding day is here, and your colon cleanse and sauna sit-ins have helped you lose 20 pounds, you may find yourself the center of attention for the wrong reasons. Dehydration, fatigue and weakness can be

consequences of a crash diet. Combine that with the nerves of your wedding day and you can faint or pass out. Sure, it’s a long shot, but you may also find yourself feeling miserable, which is the last thing you want to be on your wedding day, right?

## THE SOLUTION

A traditional wedding can take months or years to plan. If you want to lose weight, incorporate it into your planning and give yourself plenty of time, aiming to be at your goal weight at least a month before the wedding. Weight loss of one to two pounds per week is a realistic goal. But first, be honest with yourself — do you really need to lose 20 pounds? Maybe you only need to lose 10 pounds, or maybe you don’t need to lose any weight at all. Consider speaking to a professional to gain more insight on what a healthy weight is for you.

Modifying certain diet habits can have a huge impact on weight loss. Incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your diet, which are lower in calories but higher in fiber to help keep you full. Choose whole grains, which will also keep you full on fiber. Add in high-protein snacks like jerky or hard-boiled eggs to keep you feeling satisfied between meals. I never recommend that you deprive yourself of any foods because it will only make you want them even more. Instead, practice proper portioning so you can enjoy your favorite foods and not overdo it.

Increasing your daily activity can also help you burn more calories. In addition to a regular exercise routine, ramp up your activity throughout the day by taking the stairs or walking 10,000 steps instead of 6,000 steps. They may seem small, but these changes do add up to burned calories!

Most important, take this time to practice body kindness. A wedding is a celebration of love — this should include the love for yourself! If you need more tips or have questions related to diet and nutrition, I’m just an email away — [eatright@rouses.com](mailto:eatright@rouses.com). ■