

how hard is it to eat right?

WH food editor Kate Dailey finds out if it's possible to make her nutritionist happy and still live a normal life

By Kate Dailey Photograph by Todd Selby

Kate's week of healthy meals.



I may spend upwards of 40 hours a week scrutinizing nutrition studies and interviewing doctors, but I'm hardly a perfect eater. And frankly, I don't know anyone who is. Which left me wondering: How realistic is it to eat exactly what you're supposed to, all the time? For the sake of dietary science, I decided to find out.

Step one was forming my ideal eating plan. I throw myself at the mercy of nutritionist Lisa Jubilee, co-owner of Living Proof, a nutrition and fitness center in New York City. She happens to be so clear-eyed, bright-skinned, and in shape, she makes Jessica Alba look chunky. After measuring my body fat percentage and perusing a list of everything I'd eaten for the past week, Lisa tells me what I already know: I eat too many simple sugars (Combos, animal crackers, sesame chicken, beer) and too few vegetables. I weigh 146.5 pounds, which looks fine on my 5'9" frame, but I'm at about 29 percent body fat, making me a dreaded skinny fat person.

To correct all this, I'm instructed to follow four food rules that will lead to eating well:

- 1. Eat five times a day at regular intervals** (i.e., breakfast at 7 A.M., snack at 10 A.M., lunch at 1 P.M., snack at 4 P.M., and dinner at 7 P.M.).
- 2. Eat 4 ounces of lean protein**—about the size and depth of a woman's palm—twice a day.
- 3. Fill two-thirds of my plate with fruit or vegetables** twice a day.
- 4. Let no calorie be wasted.** Everything, including my snacks, has to have nutritional value. A good snack—like almonds, two mozzarella sticks, or a KeriBar—has protein, fiber, and a little fat.

If I really do my best to adhere strictly to these rules, Lisa says, everything else will fall into place. The only one of these that seems daunting to me is the first—following a set eating schedule. My typical dinner goes like this: Eat some chocolate chips while going through mail, pick at some cold leftover pasta while changing into my PJs, and snack on a bowl of cereal while watching *Veronica Mars* on DVD.

Lisa creates some sample menus for me to use as guides (find them at womenshealthmag.com) and says she'll break down my nutritional intake at the end of the week to see how well I've done. With that, I head out of her office and into the real world—where everything from deadlines to dessert-pushing waiters to my own pure laziness is working against me. Here's how it goes.

MONDAY

Eating well doesn't mean abandoning my morning ritual: Hit the snooze bar until I have 15 minutes to shower, change clothes three times, and get to work. I grab a Gnu fiber bar and apple for breakfast while I check e-mail. At lunch, I build a salad with as many vegetables as I want, some fiber-heavy carbs like chickpeas, and grilled chicken. After work, I visit my supermarket salvation, Wegman's, and stock up on healthy frozen meals (anything from Amy's Organic, Green Guru, or Seeds of Change works) for the week ahead. I also pick up dinner: crabmeat, grilled vegetables, Asian string bean salad, and Italian wedding soup. It's so much food, I almost can't finish.

Nutritional Verdict **FAIR**

Thanks to my roughage-heavy breakfast and veggie-packed lunch and dinner, I ate all my fiber, vitamin A, and vitamin C. But this is my worst day for everything else—I'm under 50 percent for most other nutrients. And in spite of all that food, my calories clocked in at under 1,000—600 short of my goal.

Lisa's Advice If I had added a glass of low-fat milk and a cheese stick, I would have gotten all my calcium plus some additional protein and still come in under my calorie budget.

TUESDAY

For breakfast I have a mix of Greek yogurt, granola cereal, and fruit preserve spread—a delicious combination created by the lovely Ms. Jubilee. It's easy to make and keeps me full all morning. At lunch, I panic. Errands keep me away from the company cafeteria, where I know I could do the salad thing again. Without an easy option, my mind goes blank...so all I eat is a bowl of soup. Tonight it's more grilled vegetables (I can't get enough), a Moosewood frozen couscous stew, spinach, and Dijon-crust sea bass. A girl could get used to this "sitting down to a real meal" thing.

Nutritional Verdict **GOOD**

My Perfect Eating Plan

1,600 calories a day

50 percent from carbs (200 grams)
25 percent from protein (120 grams)
25 percent from fat (25 grams)

8 servings of fruits and vegetables

25 grams fiber

Less than 2,400 milligrams sodium

The current recommended daily allowance of **15 vitamins and minerals** (without help from supplements)

64 ounces water

No trans fats, hydrogenated oils, or high-fructose corn syrup

I scored all my calcium, folate, magnesium, potassium, and vitamin A. But I missed my protein mark.

Lisa's Advice I should have picked up some healthy fast food while running my errands. Any of the low-fat, 6-inch Subway subs would have been fine, and a turkey sandwich from Panera Bread will do in a pinch.

WEDNESDAY

I confront my first major obstacle tonight. My boyfriend, a man I seduced by matching him martini for martini over steak and potatoes, meets me for an opera-and-dinner date. I move lunch back to accommodate our late meal time and stash a KeriBar in my purse to eat before the show. That night, he orders his martini according to our usual script ("Bombay Sapphire, very dry, no garnish"), but then I go off book, blurting out, "Just an ice water!" where I'd normally request a Tanq and tonic. I get the look I expected: *You're making me drink alone?* Then I remember a study about the health benefits of red wine—a glass a day wards off Alzheimer's and improves heart function. That's nutrition in action! I order one glass and a spinach, goat cheese, and egg-white omelet.

Nutritional Verdict **GOOD**

I ate lots of vitamins and minerals and drank so much water that I was squirming in my seat at the opera when I should have been enjoying the arias. I was still low on calcium and protein, though.

Lisa's Advice Balance out the snacks. Rather than two carb-based KeriBars during the day, I should have had cheese sticks or yogurt to up my

protein and calcium. (See more quick fixes in "Can't Get Enough?")

THURSDAY

Plans for dinner at a Mexican restaurant have me dreaming of deep-fried enchiladas, tortilla chips, guacamole, and—lord help me—margaritas. I send Lisa a panicked e-mail, then go off to a sensible lunch: chicken kabobs and a cold vegetable medley. Lisa replies with good news: "Fajitas are great because you can control portion size and load up on vegetables." She also loves guacamole, but recommends dishing 3 tablespoons (more than you think!) onto a plate and eating it with my meal, not with the deep-fried chips. And a margarita? Sure, if I skip the high-calorie corn tortillas with my fajita. (Not willing to make that sacrifice, I get the tuna steak instead.) Ultimately, I swap out the margarita for two Coronas, which weakens my resolve and...I order the chocolate cake.

Nutritional Verdict FAIR

I ate all my protein and calcium. I should hope so, since I blew my calorie budget.

Lisa's Advice I should have skipped the mussels and toast appetizer and my potato au gratin side (what, did I not

mention them?). And while indulging occasionally is fine, choosing one sin—alcohol or dessert—would have served me better.

FRIDAY

I'm a clean-eating goddess today: fruit salad for breakfast, peanut butter toast at 10 A.M., grilled chicken for lunch, sushi for dinner. But I'm worried about the weekend. My greatest ally so far has been the structured eating patterns: Eat breakfast, work a few hours, eat a snack, work a few hours, eat lunch, work a few hours, go home, eat dinner, then head to bed. But without the familiar routine, will I still eat when and what I should?

Nutritional Verdict GOOD

Fine on protein, B vitamins, and zinc, but I skimmed on vegetables—only the anemic iceberg lettuce with the chicken and some cut-up cucumbers in the sushi.

Lisa's Advice I'd have fared better if I'd ordered a side of broccoli at lunch.

SATURDAY

I have two big-eating social events: a bridal shower and a housewarming. I start off with a Lisa-approved breakfast, then luckily get lost in the wilds of New

Jersey, arriving at the shower after most of the snacking has ended. I make a sandwich of wheat bread, turkey, and vegetables, and fill my plate with the remaining crudité spread. But then the bride-to-be hands me a piece of cake in front of all the guests. As a bridesmaid it seems rude to refuse. At the housewarming, I indulge a little, but envisioning everything I eat on one plate (Lisa's trick) helps. Full disclosure: I have three glasses of wine and a few bites of sausage fresh off the grill.

Nutritional Verdict GOOD

I scored all my calcium, B vitamins, and zinc—and only went 100 calories over my goal. I was low on fiber, carbs, and folate. **Lisa's Advice** "Don't worry about it," she says. If I can resist temptation most days, I can be a little bit bad during a fete.

SUNDAY

After breakfast, I clean the bathroom, run to the hardware store, read the paper, watch *Law and Order*, and vacuum. It's suddenly 3 o'clock, and I have to rush to eat lunch (an Amy's Organic lasagna—yes, I said lasagna). I'm not hungry by dinnertime, but force down soup (I'm highly partial to butternut squash), grilled vegetables (again), and swordfish.

To celebrate my accomplishment, I top it all off with a single glass of red wine (antioxidants, people).

Nutritional Verdict GREAT

The best day yet: I ate all my protein, calcium, B vitamins, and zinc. However, I didn't get enough fiber, carbs, or folate.

Lisa's Advice Don't beat yourself up for not hitting every goal, every day. When it comes to nutrients, multivitamins are not the enemy—one a day will help fill in the nutritional blanks.

Two days later, I visit Lisa for my results. I'm more energetic and feel in control of my diet in a way that's really satisfying. And, oh yeah, I've lost 4 pounds. Though weight loss wasn't the goal, it's a decidedly welcome side effect. Lisa almost cries with joy. So, final verdict: Is it hard to eat right? My honest answer is *yes*—for the first week. Avoiding the crap, keeping calories low, and getting lots, if not all, of my nutrients was a challenge, but it was easy as long as I had set guidelines and planned ahead. Feeling the amazing effects has made me want to stick with it, and Lisa's tips have helped me troubleshoot tough spots. Weeks two and three, I'm happy to report, were almost easy.

WH

Can't Get Enough?

Easy ways to score the five nutrients women skimp on most

By Jessica Dye

NUTRIENTS	GOOD FOR	FAST FIXES (% RDA)
Vitamin D	bones, teeth, cellular health	4 oz salmon (103%) 2 c low-fat fortified milk (50%) 4 oz shrimp (40%)
Folate	red blood cell production, skin cells, nervous system	1 c asparagus (66%) 2 c romaine lettuce (40%) 1 c broccoli (23%)
Iron	circulation, immune system, energy	1 c boiled spinach (35%) 1 c Progresso Lentil Soup (20%) ¼ c pumpkin seeds (15%)
Thiamine (B1)	muscle function, nervous system, energy	¼ c sunflower seeds (55%) 4 oz tuna (37%) 1 c corn (20%)
Fiber	regularity, reducing cholesterol, stabilizing blood sugar	1 c black beans (60%) 1 c raspberries (32%) 1 packet Quaker Weight Control Oatmeal (23%)