

jemma o'hanlon

Dietitian & Nutritionist

Media Presenter



health + happiness



Jemma has been in the kitchen ever since she was old enough to say the word *cake*.

Whipping up sweet treats was her speciality, but Jemma always liked to put a healthy spin on them.

Now she's on a mission to help Aussies fall in love with food to boost their health and happiness.

↩ Click to watch 

"Seriously satisfying food that's good for you"





about

BHlthSc Nutr&Diet AdvAPD GAICD

A vibrant entertainer with an everlasting smile, Jemma is a leader of her profession and has gained the trust of Australians as the go-to expert for healthy eating.

Inspiring others to eat better is what Jemma does best. With her down to earth, bright and playful personality, Jemma's advice is always delivered in a warm, relatable style that grabs the attention of the audience.

Jemma's voice of authority is backed by her university qualifications with a Bachelor of Health Science (Nutrition & Dietetics) and formal credentials as an Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian (AdvAPD) and Accredited Nutritionist (AN).

Jemma has served a number of roles as a Non-Executive Director and Vice President of Dietitians Australia and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD).



media experience

Television

ABC News
Breakfast
My Market Kitchen
Studio 10
ABC Landline
7News
9News
10News

The House of
Wellness
QLD Weekender
SBS The Feed
A Current Affair
The Latest
WIN News

Radio

2GB
3AW
2UE
ABC Canberra,
Brisbane, Adelaide,
Hobart, South East
SA, Port Macquarie,
North QLD, Pilbara
Fox
Pulse
Triple M
6PR
Hope
2NUR
2BS
2SM
WAVE
Douglas
Ultra 106five
2CC

Print

body+soul
The Age
Sydney Morning
Herald
The Australian
The Herald Sun
The Daily Telegraph
The Advocate

The Courier Mail
Healthy Food Guide
goodfood
Men's Muscle &
Health Magazine
WA Potatoes
Magazine

Online

news.com.au
The Guardian
mybody+soul
SBS Food
kidspot
ABC Health
The New Daily
9Honey
SBS News
QLD Country Life

nine.com.au
bellamumma
Mumbrella
HuffPost
Female.com.au
Now To Love
girl.com.au
Rescu
National Tribune
Good Fruit and
Vegetables

Columns

Fitness First Magazine
Fernwood Magazine





tv nutritionist





The vegan EXPERIMENT

A YEAR AGO, DIETITIAN JEMMA O'HANLON WENT VEGAN. SHE REVEALS HOW LONG SHE LASTED AND WHETHER IT'S HEALTHY TO BE VEGAN IN THE LONG TERM.

GOING VEGAN WAS THE craziest experiment I have ever undertaken. I had been an omnivore all my life, growing up in a traditional meat and three veg family, but after becoming more interested in animal welfare and planetary health, I decided to give vegan a go. Being vegan means excluding all meat and animal products (meat, poultry, fish, seafood, dairy and eggs). I wondered how long I could possibly last. A week, possibly less? I wasn't sure.

Well, I'm pleased to say my experiment as a vegan lasted more than a year. Eventually, I introduced dairy and eggs back into my diet, but I still exclude meat. After I went vegan, the evidence on the benefits of plant-based eating continued to grow, but as with any health and fitness trend, eventually the honeymoon among the public can wear off. Veganism has come under more criticism lately, largely thanks to two reasons I consider to be myths.

NUTRITION

Juice's HEALTH STAR FALL

WITH THE HEALTH STAR RATING OF FRUIT JUICES RECENTLY PLUMMETING TO BELOW THAT OF DIET COKE, DIETITIAN JEMMA O'HANLON REVEALS WHETHER JUICE STILL HAS A PLACE IN OUR FRIDGE.

THE HEALTH STAR RATING SYSTEM was created by the Australian government to give consumers an indication of how healthy a food is. Bottled fruit juices without any added sugar were considered healthy and rated five stars. But food regulators recently slashed their ratings because of their high natural sugar content and low levels of fibre, some falling as low as two stars and considered less healthy than Diet Coke.

So does fruit juice belong in a healthy diet? The answer is yes and no - there are both pros and cons.

PROS

- 1. Fruit juice can be a great way to get your daily vitamin C, with a glass roughly providing your recommended daily intake.
- 2. Juice offers hydration - if you're someone who struggles to drink water, it can be a way to help meet your fluid intake for the day.
- 3. It offers natural sugars, which can give you a burst of energy at the gym - they can provide fuel that your muscles and brain will use as energy to perform well.
- 4. Some juices combine both fruit and veggies to give you some bonus veggie serves in your day.

CONS

- 1. We tend to overconsume juice. For example, most people could easily drink a 300ml bottle, but fewer could chomp through four oranges in one sitting. That's because it's the complex matrix of fibre in a whole piece of fruit that keeps us fuller for longer. Juice doesn't have the same satiating effect.
- 2. Drink water as your best bet.



JEMMA O'HANLON is an Accredited Practising Dietitian with a love for long marches, dark chocolate and weekend brunches. She's a Richmond House First member, triathlete, triathlete and running. Follow Jemma @jemmaohanlon.

WHAT I DO?

1. Have fruit instead. Get in your two serves of whole fruit every day, no excuses. One serve would be an orange or an apple.
2. If you wish to substitute one of those fruit serves for juice, do so occasionally with half a glass (125ml) max. You can always top this up with sparkling water to enjoy a larger glass and extra hydration.
3. If you're pumping iron regularly, smashing it out on the treadmill or generally working up a sweat, you're going to be burning more kilojoules and it might be OK to fuel up beforehand or refuel with a small glass of juice. Also consider that you'd be much better off having a glass of juice post-workout than 10 schooners of beer at the pub on Friday night.
4. If you have juice, always choose Australian. Country of origin labelling is now mandatory, so check the label and support local growers.

NUTRITION

CACAO PODS grow on cacao trees, and can reach sizes bigger than your foot. Inside them is the fruit pulp and a number of seeds, known as cacao beans, which are left to ferment for a few days. Once the beans are then dried and/or roasted, they're crushed into nibs. Cocoa powder is made by further processing to form a fine powder. This stuff, the natural product straight from the tree, is what's most brimming with goodness. It's no surprise then that the cocoa plant was named Theobroma cacao, meaning 'food of the gods'.

Chocolate is a different beast altogether, as the cocoa is mixed with sugar and cocoa butter, as well as milk powder or other additives. In simple terms, cocoa is a minimally processed natural ingredient while chocolate is an ultra-processed food, and can easily lead to weight gain if eaten in large amounts.

BRAIN FOOD COCOA VS CHOCOLATE

WITH MORE RESEARCH EMERGING ON THE BENEFITS OF COCOA ON BRAIN HEALTH, IS THIS A LICENCE TO EAT AS MUCH CHOCOLATE AS WE CAN? DIETITIAN JEMMA O'HANLON UNWRAPS THE EVIDENCE.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Cocoa contains powerful antioxidants known as flavanols, particularly epicatechin and catechins, which have been found to help lower blood pressure, improve blood flow to the brain and heart, prevent blood clots and fight cell damage. Studies have also linked chocolate with reduced symptoms of depression and improved mental health and cognitive performance. Plus, chocolate contains caffeine and theobromine, which can stimulate the brain. Serotonin production is triggered by eating chocolate, too, so it's no wonder it makes us feel happier.

CAN I HAVE MY CHOCOLATE AND EAT IT, TOO?

While we all love to think that a bar of milk chocolate is healthy, it's the natural plant beans that give us all the health benefits. Here's my advice.

01. Enjoy cocoa powder to your heart's content (pun intended). Use it to whip up healthy

bites balls; chuck a tablespoon of cocoa in a mug with milk and make a warming hot chocolate, or add a tablespoon to your morning porridge.

02. If you can source some cacao beans or nibs, do so (most major retailers now stock them). These guys are the chocolate fix you've been dying for without the added nasties. Yes, they're extremely bitter, but you'll get used to them and before you know it you'll be acting all George Clooney and choosing only the finest beans you can get your hands on. One of my favourite snacks is fresh blueberries. Here are the pros and cons.
03. If you must have chocolate, a little bit of the dark variety is OK. Go for 70% dark chocolate or higher and have a maximum of three squares (30g). This will add 700kJ and 9g of sugar to your diet if you can stop at just three, so weigh up how often you wish to indulge in this treat.



NUTRITION

Christmas PROTEIN BALLS

GET INTO THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASON WITH THESE FESTIVE PROTEIN BALLS FROM DIETITIAN JEMMA O'HANLON.



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Makes 8

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup almonds
- 6 Medjool dates, pitted
- 1/4 cup dried cherries
- 1/4 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp mixed spice
- 1/4 tsp ground ginger
- 1/4 tsp ground cloves
- Shredded coconut (for rolling)

Place all ingredients in a food processor and blend until it comes together and forms a paste. mould into eight balls, roll in coconut and refrigerate prior to serving.

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
Serving Size: 60g (2 balls)		
	Per serve	Per 100g
Energy	527kJ	1545kJ
Protein	5g	14.4g
Fat, total	13.2g	22.0g
Fat, saturated	1.6g	2.5g
Carbohydrate	19g	31.5g
Sugars	18.6g	30.9g
Sodium	8mg	13mg



JEMMA O'HANLON is an Accredited Practising Dietitian with a love for long marches, dark chocolate and weekend brunches. Apart from group fitness classes and running, you'll find her enjoying the supermarket aisles and researching the latest foodie trends. @jemmaohanlon

SHOULD I BE EATING FOODS WITH ADDED PROBIOTICS?

Overall, while commercial food products with probiotics may provide some added goodness, most of the time they have a 'health halo' effect. This is where processed foods are perceived to be healthy (or healthier), which justifies the choice in a person's mind to eat them. What I'd suggest is avoiding ultra-processed foods like ice cream or chips for probiotics. We all know these are 'sometimes' foods, so you're much better off enjoying your absolute favourite ice cream on a special occasion and loading up your daily diet with probiotics through whole and fermented foods.

A plant-rich, unprocessed, Mediterranean dietary pattern

is a great step forward. Fermented foods that are good to load up on include yoghurt, fresh sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir, kombucha, miso and tempeh. Foods made using traditional fermentation methods are the best. And it's worth keeping in mind that high heat processing of commercial products can kill off good bacteria.

It's also thought that probiotic levels may reduce (potentially halve) from when a product is first manufactured to when it reaches its best before date. What you read on the label should be the amount that will be present at time of the best before date, but you can always check in with the manufacturer and request more information about their verification processes.

EAT WHOLE FOODS FOR THE BEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

Another benefit to choosing whole foods over ultra-processed products is that you get the best bang for your buck. Take yoghurt, for example. You get more than 10 essential nutrients in just a single serve, including protein for muscle growth and recovery, and B group vitamins to boost your mood. Whole foods contain a matrix of nutrients that supersede any ultra-processed product with added probiotics.

ARE HUGE DOSES OF PROBIOTICS BETTER?

Not necessarily. Aim for at least 100 million colony-forming units (CFUs, the number of viable bacteria in a serve) each day. This may sound like a lot, although it can be easily achieved with the help of a dietitian. Just like you don't need to run a marathon daily to be fit, when it comes to probiotic intake, regularity and consistency are more important than having excess amounts.

HOW DO PROBIOTICS HELP?

Probiotics are the food for probiotics and together they are the yin and the yang. Foods rich in prebiotics include onions, garlic, Jerusalem artichokes, chicory root, bananas, legumes, asparagus, leeks, barley and oats. Inulin, which features in some of the products listed here, is a prebiotic. Generally, if your diet is rich in plant foods, you'll tend to meet these needs. Roughly, you should be aiming for 10g of prebiotics each day and your dietitian can help you achieve this.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO GET AN IRON STOMACH IN A NON-SIX PACK WAY?

- There are five ways to focus on for healthy gut:
1. **Eat whole foods:** Fill your diet with whole, plant-rich and fermented foods.
 2. **Exercise:** Thank goodness we don't have to spell out the benefits of this one to Fitness First members!
 3. **Don't smoke:** A no-brainer. Ditch the cigarettes, even those cheery ones on the weekend.
 4. **Limit alcohol:** Alcohol has a nasty effect on the gut, so keep alcohol intake to a minimum.
 5. **Manage stress:** Be sure to keep a check on this, as the brain and gut are closely connected. Conditions in the gut like IBS can be triggered from intense stress.

OVERALL VERDICT

Probiotics are no silver bullet to good health, but they may provide some benefits to improve your overall health in the right conditions. Foods with added probiotics may be a choice you wish to make on a special occasion if you can afford them, but the truth is that a diet rich in whole foods is brimming with all the good stuff you need.



VEGETARIAN KETO: A HEALTHY KETO ALTERNATIVE?

FOR MOST PEOPLE, THE KETOGENIC DIET GENERALLY MEANS EATING MORE FATTY MEATS AND FISH. SO CAN A PLANT-BASED KETO DIET WORK? DIETITIAN JEMMA O'HANLON INVESTIGATES.

ONCE THOUGHT OF AS A FAD, IT seems keto is here to stay. But a new twist on the diet reveals that some are now exploring keto in a vegetarian format, thanks to the hype around plant-based eating.

In the keto diet, the goal is to switch your body from burning glycogen to fat. This is done by limiting carbs to no more than 20g per day and ensuring 70% of your calories come from healthy fats, mostly from animals and fish. In the vegetarian keto diet, meat and fish are replaced by healthy fats from plant-based foods like avocados, nuts, seeds and coconut oil.

So is the vegetarian version a 'healthier' keto diet and is it something worth trying? Here are the pros and cons.

PROS

YOU'RE NOT USING ANIMAL FATS

A positive is that you'll be swapping out animal fats (high in saturated fat) for nourishing fats like avocados, nuts and olive oil, which would be a positive for your heart health and cholesterol management. Coconut oil in large amounts is one to be careful of as it's high in saturated fat, even though it's plant based.

CONS

KETO DIETS ARE HARD ENOUGH

The strictness of the diet means that keto is difficult to maintain. There are also nasty side effects like the keto flu, bad breath and constipation when you're making the transition from burning glycogen to burning fat. Many attempts at keto fail right there and then, even before you enter ketosis and the diet starts working. If you're a meat lover, cutting out meat is going to add to the complexity of this already challenging diet.

NUTRITIONAL BALANCE IS HARD

Vegetarian diets are naturally higher in carbs, so to find nutritional balance plus enjoyment on a vegetarian keto diet would be very hard to achieve. For example, many

nutrient-rich foods like wholegrains and legumes contain carbs, which means these foods would have to be limited. Just like following the regular keto diet, you'd need to be extremely rigid with your food choices, counting every carb, and as a result it would be easy to fall into an unhealthy pattern of restrictive eating.

IT WILL BE HARD TO MAINTAIN

Diets only last as long as you stick to them. You might feel amazing losing weight on a keto diet quickly, but what happens when you decide to have a few prints on a Friday night followed by a greasy burger? Your body is pretty good at regulating itself, so soon enough you'll have chucked on more weight than you lost, plus interest.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Vegetarian diets are some of the healthiest diets in the world. Being plant based, they're rich in antioxidants, vitamins and minerals, as well as dietary fibre. Following any kind of keto diet can put you at risk of developing an unhealthy relationship with food and increase the risk of nutrient deficiencies. Our advice? Skip keto altogether. If you want to lose a few kilos, try a well-balanced vegetarian diet and see an accredited practising dietitian (daa.asn.au) who can support your health and wellbeing goals.

writer

As a trusted nutrition expert, Jemma has written for popular magazines, online platforms, blogs and brands for over 12 years, and knows how to succinctly answer those curly nutrition questions in a way that everyone understands.

It's Jemma's natural ability to translate complex science into simple bites of information that sets her apart, and with her finger on the pulse, she writes with authority on the hot topics relevant to her audience.

jemmaohanlon.com

Sweets

E B O O K



JEMMA O'HANLON

social media



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"She's a brilliant media communicator, a rare nutritionist who has a chef's passion for the kitchen and uses a highly relatable style to get her audience excited about food and nutrition."

- Tony Sarno, Editor in Chief,
Fitness First Magazine



let's chat

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