

INTRO TO THE CHALLENGE

Before I share exact details of the challenge I wanted to do a quick reminder of the ethos that sits beneath all the Better Than Yesterday challenges. And that is:

Tiny changes, made daily (or thereabouts), add up to something big.

All of these challenges are designed to be very gentle, increase mindfulness about how we approach the important things in life, and assist in making tiny changes on a daily basis that then become habit.

When things become habit, we don't have to think about them as much and life becomes easier.

Ok – on to the nutrition challenge now.

This challenge isn't about losing weight, quitting sugar, or going on a 'diet'. This challenge is about boosting the nutritional density of all our meals. The more we focus on what we can eat, the less likely we are to feel deprived about what we 'shouldn't' eat.

While 5 cups of veggies in a day (the goal for week 3) might seem like a crazy amount of veggies, it's not. It just takes a little bit of preparation and forward thinking (like anything really). By the end of these three weeks, I'm hoping we'll all have some solid strategies and routines in place that make it easy for us to get those 5 cups of veggies on our plates on a daily basis.

But ...

This is not one of those all or nothing challenges. All any of us can do is our best. Understand, life WILL get in the way over the course of the next few weeks and if one day doesn't go so well, no worries – a new day always follows.

'RULES' OF THE PROGRAM

What is a veggie? Let's make it simple – something you'd be able to buy from the veggie section of your supermarket (that isn't a nut or a seed). Yes, tomatoes, avocados, peas etc are technically 'fruit' – but let's not get technical ok!

What does a cup of a veggie look like? The uncooked version of the veggie, cut up (in the case of things like cucumbers and zucchinis) or loose (spinach/lettuce etc) that can fit into 1 cup of a measuring cup. Packed or loose? Neither – more like something in between :)

Can I eat 5 cups of the same veggie? Please don't. Please try and eat no more than one cup of any one veggie (unless we're talking salad greens or spinach). You'll get the best results (nutrients-wise) by ensuring a 'rainbow' of veggies graces your plates over the course of a day.

Are there any veggies I should avoid? I don't want to get too prescriptive about this, but if you want a rough guide about which veggies are best to eat only small amounts of, [this one is pretty good](#).

I need to go shopping – what should I get? Salad greens, 2 zucchinis, bag of carrots, a bunch of celery, tomatoes or cherry tomatoes, capsicum, cauliflower, cucumber, broccoli, pumpkin, sweet potato and avocado. While not a vegetable, if you get some pine nuts, these are great for roasting or pan frying and then throwing into a spinach salad.

What about salad dressings? Most commercial salad dressings are high in sugar so it's always best to make your own. [There are some great recipes here](#).

What's your green smoothie recipe? [I share it here](#).

I have no ideas for how to get more veggies on my plate. Never fear – we'll all be sharing our plates and recipes in the [Better Than Yesterday group on Facebook](#). Also keep an eye on the #betterthanyesterday #veggiechallenge hashtag on Instagram.

WEEK 1

Week 1 of the Nutrition Challenge is all about easing our way into eating more veggies.

Our aim for this week is to eat 3 cups of veggies a day.

What might that look like?

- 1 green smoothie with a good handful of spinach is 1 cup.
- Some sautéed spinach and mushrooms with your eggs on toast would be another 1-2 cups.
- A nice big salad would easily be another 2 cups.
- Some steamed veggies with your dinner would be 1-2 cups (depending on how much you have).
- Some cut up carrot sticks, cauliflower, broccoli or snap beans for an afternoon snack would be another 1 cup.

WEEK 2

This week we're aiming to up to ante and get 4 cups of veggies on to our plates each day. And ... let's try to cut back on (or, if you're game, totally eliminate) snacking.

I outline [my stance on snacking in this post](#) and it's worth having a read of it in full. But, in a nutshell, the vast, vast majority of us are snacking out of habit, boredom, or because we're not eating nourishing meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

So, while the goal for this week is to try and get through our days without snacking, there are a few caveats:

- If you're training for a 100km walk you're going to need to snack because you're going to be hungry.
- If you get to 10.30am or 3pm and you're genuinely hungry (as opposed to bored and looking for a diversion) - then by all means, snack, but not on a muffin or a pastry. Snack on veggies. If you feel the veggies just aren't filling you up, dip them in [hummus](#) or a [nut butter](#) (preferably that you've made yourself so there's not a bunch of crap in there :)

And that's it for this coming week. I'm loving hearing from people how the simple focus of getting more veggies on their plate has changed their approach to eating and meal prep this week.

As always, remember the goal of these challenges is not to be perfect, it's to be better than yesterday. If you have a day where everything goes a bit pear-shaped, no worries! Tomorrow is a new day :)

WEEK 3

This week we're going to try and up our veggie intake again! To five cups a day.

We're also going to try and maintain a mindful approach to snacking.

And finally, we're going to try and stop 'picking' while we're making meals. Are you a compulsive picker? I know I am. I can EASILY consume two dinners every night - one while I am making dinner, then another when we actually sit down to eat what's on our plate. Picking is a great enemy of portion control so, this week, just be aware of your behaviour in that regard.

Do you want to talk about weight loss?

A few people asked me if they should weigh themselves at the start of this challenge and I got into a conversation about weight loss with them that I thought I'd share with you guys. (The main points anyway.) Here they are:

- 1. For effective long-term weight loss you need three things,** in this order: good sleep, good nutrition, regular exercise. Poor sleeping habits throw your hormones out of whack, and you can't 'out-nutrition' hormonal imbalances. Similarly, you can't out-exercise poor nutrition habits.
- 2. Throw away your scales.** At a conference I attended recently, one of the speakers said the best thing to do with your scales is wrap them up and give them to your worst enemy. Anyone who's ever tried to lose weight will know that their body changes well ahead of any kind of number shifting on the scales. Their clothes fit better and people say 'Hey, you're looking great!' yet they still hate their body because the number on their scales haven't shifted.
- 3. If you need a metric, take a waist, hip and thigh measurement.** My podcasting buddy Carly recently lost 8cm off her hips yet only lost 1kg on the scales. Throw the scales away!
- 4. Don't diet. Please don't diet.** Commit instead to changing your sleeping, eating and exercise habits to something you can maintain in the long term. This doesn't mean you won't 'slip up' or regress in some way. We're only human. But, by making a sustainable commitment to long-term health, when you 'slip up', it's very easy to return to those healthy habits. In fact, your body will crave them,