



Alexander McQueen: liposuction Lost 1½ stone in a year

The comfortably chunky Alexander McQueen dropped a stone and a half in a year. He tried liposuction – ‘because it was quick and I didn’t have time for anything else between collections’ – but wasn’t entirely impressed by the long-term effects. ‘Liposuction is crap, by the way,’ he recently announced. ‘It doesn’t work for men. It sucks up all the fat cells, but then they just get bigger.’ Instead, he opted for a combination of healthy eating, yoga, power walking (he claims he walks everywhere now), and fat-blocking pills, Chitosan, which he buys from Harrods.

5 steps for healthy dieting

The word diet comes from the Greek *diaita*, meaning ‘way of life’. And that’s exactly what it should be – a permanent new lifestyle rather than a temporary eating plan. Fat lost quickly on gimmicky diets piles straight back on when you start eating normally again. The trick is to eat healthily, exercise regularly and slim gently.

1 You only need to cut out 200 calories per day to lose weight (assuming you are usually within the recommended limits of 1,500 calories per day for women and 2,000 calories for men). That’s merely three eggs, one portion of chips or 50g cheddar cheese.

2 Keep creative control over your meals – following menu drills is boring. *The Fat, Fibre and Carbohydrate Counter*, edited by Dell Stanford (Murdoch Books, £2.99), details the content of most foods. Get over the obsessive-compulsive connotations of calorie counting – you’ll soon reach for healthier foods instinctively.

3 Keep your meals balanced – the more natural colours on your plate, the more nutrients you get. And forget food combining – all the food groups (protein, carbohydrate and fats) are essential. Eat fresh. Don’t fry. Shun fat. Follow this mantra and you can’t go wrong.

4 Exercise! Three times a week for 20 minutes is enough. You don’t need to go near a gym – anything that makes you break out in a sweat counts. A brisk walk on a Sunday, a swim midweek, one game of squash and bam! – you’ve got yourself a fitness regime.

5 Aim to fit clothes better rather than weigh less. A fit, toned body weighs more than a flabby one of the same size. And don’t give up if you fall off the wagon. A couple of high-calorie days with your feet up are fine every once in a while. **SD**

‘Oh no! You’re not binning the Nutella!’

Why is *ES* chef Allegra McEvedy enlisting the help of a food trainer? The very phrase conjures up images of entourage-endowed Hollywood startlets taking their ‘nutritional adviser’ along to restaurants to guide them through the ordering minefield. But Allegra confesses that most chefs know surprisingly little about nutrition.

‘I love food, it’s my life. But I’ve always eaten entirely for pleasure. Now I have a few TV appearances in the offing and, with the old adage of the camera adding 10lb ringing in my ears, vanity has finally got the better of me,’ she says. Hence the morning runs in the park with a personal trainer and a series of nutritional seminars with lifestyle consultant Sarah Tay.

Before the programme begins, Allegra starts keeping a food diary, which Sarah then analyses in detail over a cuppa at the kitchen table. While educating her about ‘nutrient robbers’ and ‘sugar rushes’, Sarah discovers Allegra’s real problem lies in irregular eating patterns. The diary entry for one lean day says it all: ‘6pm: vodka and some gherkins’. On another, when on a catering job, she eats nothing all day but canapés.

Sarah is concerned, but views it as an understandable hazard of the job. ‘Often, when you’re working hard, you tend to see food simply as fuel. And when you’re stressed, looking after your diet is the first thing to go, when actually it’s the most important time to look after yourself.’

The good news for Allegra, though, is that balance doesn’t have to be achieved all in the one meal. ‘If you overdo the carbs at lunchtime – testing cake recipes for *ES*, say – just eat a simple piece of fish for dinner,’ Sarah suggests. ‘Or take an apple with you.’

Two weeks later, Sarah returns to check on progress and scrutinise Allegra’s food-storage area in the dreaded cupboard audit. Generally, she’s pleased and

Allegra (left) watches in horror as Sarah clears out her storage cupboard



declares it ‘not a bad cupboard at all’, particularly as, on shelves heaving with preserved lemons, chilli oil and lavender sugar, somewhere lurks the makings of a balanced meal. Unfortunately, it’s not all gourmet quality, so it’s out with the catering-size pack of Atora, the *Celebrity Lunch Tongue in Jelly* (‘You’re never going to eat that’) and a preserving jar labelled,

mysteriously, ‘various fats’. The session is in danger of turning into a round of *Room 101* when Sarah pulls out an out-of-date jar of Nutella and Allegra fights back. ‘It’s fine, leave it in.’

Amid the banter, though, there are lessons to be learned. One of the biggest surprises is that a few simple changes can make a dramatic difference. Like drinking more water.

Sarah explains: ‘A well-hydrated digestive system is more efficient, so in a healthy metabolism, just drinking more water can on its own lead to weight loss.’ Unsurprisingly, the words ‘pint of water’ pepper Allegra’s food diary for the following week. She also reminds Allegra that eating even a small breakfast will kick-start her metabolism, achieving greater weight loss than having nothing at all.

Allegra manages to pick up a few culinary tips along the way – like how overheating cooking oil eventually turns it into saturated fat. Henceforth the extra virgin is viewed with even more reverence in the McEvedy kitchen.

Sarah rounds off her programme a fortnight later with a review session. Her verdict? ‘I’m pleased that Allegra has managed to incorporate small changes into her eating habits over several weeks which are easily sustainable. There’s no reason why she can’t keep it all up.’

Allegra, meanwhile, feels better informed. ‘The diary made me a lot more aware of the emotional effects, of how certain foods made me feel tired, others happy and gorgeous. I’m already drinking more water, the fruit bowl is full, and there’s always the bowl of nuts and seeds to snack on,’ she says, slapping her slimline thighs and patting her svelt tum. She’s ready for her close-up. **Neil McLennan** Sarah Tay is lifestyle consultant at *The Tonic* (020 7221 6574; www.the-tonic.com)