

MEAL PLANS by Vicki Edgson



A message from Vicki Edgson

“The nutritional part of this 12-week challenge provides you with easy-to-follow meal plans to show you just how simple it is to eat to support your bone, ligament and cartilage health rather than simply your general health. These meal plans will also encourage you to eat a much greater selection of foods than usual so rise to the challenge, buy the foods suggested, and take advantage of the delicious recipes that have been prepared for you by Amanda Cross.”

First let’s take a look at the nutrients and relative foods that are vital for bone rebuilding and repair, so that you can understand why it is important to eat a wide variety of foods in your weekly regime. Each nutrient highlights those foods which provide the best sources of that specific nutrient, so that you can ensure you eat those foods regularly. You will notice from the meal plans that certain foods occur regularly throughout the four weeks – e.g. dairy produce, eggs, nuts and seeds, leafy green vegetables and wholegrains – this is because ALL of these foods contain several of the nutrients integral to bone, ligament, teeth, hair and nail health.

Calcium – required for bone resorption and the production of osteoblasts (bone building cells). Best sources include dairy produce, tofu, bony fish such as sardines, whitebait and salmon steaks with small bones left intact. We recommend that semi-skimmed milk should be used where stated and either Greek style or half-fat yoghurt is suitable – do not opt for 0% yoghurt, as the fat content is important in moderation.



Magnesium – required for the absorption of calcium into the bone itself. In the absence of suitable quantities of magnesium, calcium is of little use and can even become troublesome to other systems in the body. Best sources include all wholegrains such as oats, millet, corn, rye, pulses including lima, kidney and soybeans, green leafy vegetables such as savoy cabbage, curly kale, spinach, parsley and rocket.

Manganese – required for bone growth. Manganese works with calcium to maintain bone density. Best sources include all wholegrains such as corn, wheat and oat buckwheat, millet, rye and barley.

Zinc – required to stimulate the mineralisation of the inner cortex of bone tissue and potentiate the effects of calcium on osteoblasts (bone building cells). Found in all shellfish and seafood, poultry, lean red meat, wholegrains and pulses.

Boron – works synergistically with calcium, magnesium and vitamin C as well as being vital for the metabolism of calcium. Best sources include eggs and dark green vegetables.

Selenium – a prime antioxidant required to protect all functional cells in the body and to protect against inflammation in the joints and bursal fluid. Best sources include sesame seeds, (tahini – sesame seed spread) shellfish and seafood.

.....

Vitamin D – helps the body to absorb calcium. Best sources include oily fish, eggs and complex cereal grains such as millet, barley, brown rice and buckwheat.

.....

Omega – 3 – required by every cell in the body to ensure absorption of nutrients and expulsion of metabolic waste products across the cell walls. Vital for reducing inflammation and the main causes of degeneration in bone tissue. Best sources include all oily fish, nuts and seeds, and their oils, and soya beans.

.....

The following meal plan offers the very best variety and combination of these essential bone-building nutrients and has been designed to be eaten in conjunction with taking Osteocare Plus. You can choose which week you want to start with, and take them in any order you please, as long as you follow the 4 week plan for a total of 12 weeks. The idea is that each of the four weeks focuses on TWO of the main essential nutrients with one or more of the others to give you the best combination over the ensuing 12 weeks. We have also included 12 weekly motivators to keep you on track. If you are vegetarian, you may want to mix the beans, pulses and soya based foods from one week to the next to ensure that you are getting a sufficient combination of proteins over the 12 week period. Be creative, buy your food consciously, choosing the freshest ingredients you can find, and you will experience some of the most delicious and satisfying food you have eaten in a long time! Enjoy!

Additional Notes

Drinks – coffee, tea and all carbonated soft drinks are calcium agonists, blocking the body's absorption of this vital nutrient, or leaching stores of it from bone. We recommend that you substitute (where possible) these regular hot drinks with green or white tea and herbal teas such as fennel, nettle, ginger, dandelion or burdock which possess beneficial antioxidants and natural enzymes, helping you digest your food more efficiently. These teas can be made up hot and cooled for refreshing alternatives to carbonated drinks, which have the same damaging effect on bone as coffee and tea.

Milk – ideally use semi-skimmed milk where stated and full-fat or low-fat yoghurt, rather than no-fat yoghurt. Goat/sheep's milk contains the same amount of calcium as cow's milk. For those who are following a dairy-free dietary regime, choose soya milk or a nut-derived milk such as almond or cashew nut milk to ensure an adequate protein substitute. However, take care when choosing soya yoghurts, most of which tend to be overly sweetened – better to use soya milk with fresh fruit instead, blended into a smoothie, and frozen until required.

Chocolate – good quality, high cocoa content chocolate is a source of calcium! However, this is NOT an excuse to choose chocolate over wholefood sources of calcium just to feed a chocoholic habit! There is a two-fold rule about chocolate to obtain the benefits of its calcium content – the first is that it HAS to be 70% cocoa content or more to qualify and the second is that chocolate should only be eaten as part of a whole meal (preferably at the end) and should NEVER constitute a meal or snack on its own!

Snacks – the question of snacks is always an interesting one! I prefer to suggest that you are aiming for a mini-meal that is healthy, rather than going for naughties – you are allowed the following puddings and treats instead!

Aim to carry your snacks with you to work, rather than looking around for them when you are hungry – you will never make a healthy choice when you are consumed with hunger. Better to split up the day into two or three hour intervals, whereby you have a fruit type of snack in the morning, and more of a savory, or high protein snack in the mid-afternoon, when your energy is at it lowest.

Think about your mid-afternoon snack when planning lunch – it may be that you buy a large hummous wrap, that is too large for lunch – the second half of your wrap could hold you in stead for your mid-afternoon snack – the same for a box of sushi – do you really need the whole box for lunch, or could you save a few pieces for your mid-afternoon snack? If you take a small chiller bag with you to work, you could carry a whole host of goodies – smoothies, fruit, nut and seed bars, home-made salads.

Morning Snacks – make this fruit based – either a ready-made smoothie or thickie that has yoghurt in it, or a small cup of yoghurt, granola and fruit (more like a second breakfast if you have only had a light one). 1 piece of large fruit, banana, apple, peach or two small (plums, apricots or kiwis) is sufficient, or a ready-prepared mixed fruit salad cup.

Afternoon Snacks – it is better NOT to have fruit in the afternoon, especially if you have a desk-bound job, as the fruit tends to ferment on top of all the other food you have eaten for breakfast and lunch, causing bloating and wind.

Choose instead from the following high protein snacks that will give you longer-lasting energy at a time of the day when your energy is low:

Small handful mixed unsalted, unroasted nuts (prepare these at home into zip-lock bags that have no more than 10 nuts combining cashews, almonds, hazlenuts, pecans and walnuts).

Small tub cottage cheese, as is with a few carrot or celery sticks.

1 nut and seed bar (check the sugar content of these – some are MUCH higher in sugar than others – try to avoid those with dried fruits added, as these tend to create bloating).

1 large cup fresh miso soup – sachets available from oriental sections of supermarkets – just add hot water (from soya beans that are pure vegetable protein – great for those days when you need the energy, but don't want to actually eat anything!)

1-2 small slices ready-cooked chicken, parma ham, baked ham or beef with horseradish sauce or mustard to spice it up!

1/3 pack marinated tofu.

Small tub hummous, avocado guacamole or taramasalata with baby carrots and courgettes for dipping.

Small carton of mixed feta and olives in olive oil.

Make sure to vary your snacks as much as you do your weekly menus – don't allow yourself to get stuck with the same two or three week in, week out. Look for seasonal fruits to try, and experiment with making your own mini-wraps from Chinese cabbage with olive tapenades, vegetarian bean and mushroom pates, smoked mackerel and salmon spreads and pates. These are quick and easy to make, and you can wrap them in cling film to keep them protected in your bag. Alternatively, think about purchasing a small chiller bag that you can take all these snacks in to work.

Puddings and treats – keep stocks of poached fruit (R) and frozen yoghurts (that you have made yourself in the blender combined with fresh fruits and then frozen, rather than commercial varieties) with the occasional home-made dark chocolate mousse for the ultimate treat. Do NOT be tempted to buy commercially produced puddings, as these always contain high percentages of sugars in all forms, to preserve the product. It takes minutes to prepare frozen yoghurts, and poached fruits enable you to consume a wide variety of produce that you may not choose to eat otherwise (see recipes for options).

All vegetarian dishes are marked with (V) and all those dishes with attached recipes marked (R).

Soups, casseroles and other pre-prepared dishes from supermarkets are allowed occasionally but always choose the freshly made varieties, rather than frozen and remember that home-made is by far the BEST!

Week 1

YOUR WEEKLY MOTIVATOR

CHANGE YOUR HABITS NOW FOR THE BONE-SUPPORTING OPTIONS FOR THIS WEEK AND SEE HOW GOOD YOU FEEL BY DAYS 4 & 5. THIS PLAN WILL HELP YOU TO EAT IN BALANCE, GIVING YOU A LOT MORE ENERGY THAN YOU HAVE HAD IN A LONG TIME!

Featuring Calcium, Magnesium and Manganese

Day one

Breakfast: 2 scrambled eggs with 4 oz flaked salmon and chives, root ginger (2-3 slices) and hot water tea, 1 apple

Lunch: 1 cup (8-10 oz cooked) brown rice risotto with baby leeks, asparagus and peas, medium green leafy salad (V) (R)

Dinner: Stir-fried chicken breast (one small) or ½ pack tofu diced, (V) and mixed vegetables – red & yellow bell peppers, courgettes, cauliflower

Day Two

Breakfast: 1 large, or 2 small pieces toasted pumpernickel or rye toast with 3 oz cottage cheese (V) and 1 slice ham (optional), 1-2 mugs hot water and lemon. Pear or nectarine

Lunch: Large bowl Tuscan bean soup with 2 slices or 1 roll wholemeal bread, 1 apple or 2 sticks celery

Dinner: Poached sea bass fillet or bream fillet with lemongrass, shallots and mixed vegetables with 3 oz rice noodles (dry weight) (R)

Day Three

Breakfast: 200gm (6 oz) plain bio yoghurt with 1 cup mixed berries, 1 cup granola and 1 dessert spoon flaked almonds, banana, green tea (V)

Lunch: Turkey and salad wholemeal sandwich, (2 pieces bread only) ready-prepared tray of mixed crudité's of raw celery, carrot and mangetout

Dinner: Spinach, red onion and rocket omelette (2 eggs) with tomato, 6-8 black olives and avocado (1 whole) salad (V)

Day Four

Breakfast: 1 cup multigrain bircher muesli soaked overnight in apple juice, with added fresh berries and plain bio yoghurt, (V) see recipe for quantities, 1 – 2 cups fennel tea

Lunch: 1 medium portion (6-8 oz) spinach and ricotta wholewheat lasagne with green salad (V)

Dinner: 8 oz grilled salmon steak with grated ginger and tamari sauce, 2 whole bak choy and 3-4 baby squash (R)

Day Five

Breakfast: 2 poached eggs on 2 pieces wholemeal or rye toast, 2 plums and 1-2 cups white tea (V)

Lunch: Medium baked potato with 4oz tuna or salmon and 1 cup greek salad (including olives, feta and tomatoes)

Dinner: 2 cups Moroccan lamb tagine with 1 cup couscous or brown rice (R)

Day Six

Breakfast: 1 cup porridge with cow's or almond milk (V), with 2 oz pumpkin and sunflower seeds, 1 apple, 1 cup green tea

Lunch: Tomato, mozzarella and artichoke pasta salad with added cashew nuts (6-8 cashews)

Dinner: 2 tuna or halloumi brochettes with peppers, onions, baby courgettes and cumin, brown rice (V) (R)

Day Seven

Breakfast: 'Everything-in-it' smoothie, including 2 oz oats, 2 teaspoons linseeds, 1 banana, mango or papaya, 1 ½ cups cow's, soya milk or almond milk (V) (R), 1-2 cups white tea

Lunch: 1 small hummous and mixed leaves wrap, (V) (if buying double pack, save second wrap for mid-afternoon snack)

Dinner: 2 large cups or 6oz – 8 oz lamb and tomato casserole with mixed vegetables and pearl barley (R)

YOUR WEEKLY MOTIVATOR

MAKE SURE THAT YOU EAT FOODS TO SUPPORT YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM, AS WELL AS BOOSTING YOUR BONE HEALTH IT GIVES YOU AN ADDED BONUS AT A TIME OF THE YEAR WHEN YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM IS MOST CHALLENGED. AS ZINC IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SENSITIVITY OF OUR TASTE BUDS, NOTICE HOW MUCH MORE YOU ACTUALLY TASTE WITH YOUR FOOD AND HOW MUCH YOU ENJOY THOSE TASTES.

Featuring Calcium, Zinc and Boron

Day One

Breakfast: 200 gm (6oz) Greek yoghurt with 1 cup mixed berries (fresh or from frozen), 6-8 almonds, 1 teaspoon pumpkin and sunflower seeds, and 2 oz jumbo oats, 1 cup sliced root ginger and hot water (V)

Lunch: 2 cups prawn and wholewheat pasta salad with ½ bag mixed leaves, olive oil, lemon and honey dressing (V)

Dinner: 1 x 8oz turkey or tofu burgers on wholewheat muffin with 1 large grilled Portobello mushroom and parsley (V) (R)

Day Two

Breakfast: 2 oz cream cheese and chives on 2 pieces toasted pumpernickel, 1 pear, 2 cups nettle tea

Lunch: 3 – 4 small falafel with greek salad in 2 medium wholemeal pitta bread (V)

Dinner: Poached 6- 8 oz swordfish steak with garlic and coriander, julienne of carrots, French beans and aubergine with barley couscous (V) (R)

Day Three

Breakfast: 1 cup porridge made with cow's or rice milk (V) with 2 fresh apricots, 2 teaspoons raisins and 2 teaspoons blanched almonds, 1-2 cups white tea

Lunch: Large baked sweet potato with 3oz flaked chicken or 3oz butter or kidney beans and grated parmesan, green salad (V)

Dinner: 6- 8oz grilled fillet steak with knob garlic butter, and 2 cups mixed green beans (French, runner and mange tout)

Day Four

Breakfast: 2 scrambled eggs with 3 oz smoked salmon on 2 pieces rye toast or 2 buckwheat blinis, 1 apple, 1-2 cups nettle tea

Lunch: Large bowl butternut squash and lentil soup with 2 slices or 1 roll wholewheat bread, mixed raw vegetable crudité's (V)

Dinner: 2 turkey skewers with shiitake mushrooms and green peppers, with lime and yoghurt sauce, 1 cup wild rice (R)

Day Five

Breakfast: 'Everything-in-it' smoothie with 2 oz oats or millet flakes, 1 banana, 1 cup mixed berries, 2 tsp. sunflower and pumpkin seeds, 1 ½ cups cow's, soya or almond milk and 1-2 cups hot water and ginger

Lunch: Crayfish salad with baby spinach, rocket and lettuce, apple (V)

Dinner: 2 cups mixed bean casserole with tomato, pumpkin and tarragon, 1 cup barley couscous (R)

Day Six

Breakfast: 2 boiled eggs and 2 slices wholewheat toasted 'soldiers', 1 banana, 1-2 cups fennel tea

Lunch: 1 tin sardines (drained of oil or brine) on 2 slices rye bread or 3-4 corn crackers with mixed leaf salad (V)

Dinner: 2 large or 3 medium grilled lamb chops with rosemary, 2 cups peas, baby carrots and mange tout

Day Seven

Breakfast: 1 cup bircher muesli with 2 tablespoons plain bio yoghurt, 1 cup poached mixed fruits with star anise and 2 oz blanched almonds (R)

Lunch: Chicken salad (1 small breast, sliced) with 3 oz new potatoes and ½ bag baby spinach

Dinner: 6- 8 oz salmon or ½ block tofu with coconut milk curry with lemongrass, 1 cup brown rice (R)

Week 3

YOUR WEEKLY MOTIVATOR

NOT ONLY DO YOU HAVE MORE STAMINA NOW, BUT CHECK OUT HOW STRONG YOU ARE - WHETHER IT'S IN THE GYM, CARRYING HEAVY ITEMS, OR ANY OTHER STRENGTH TEST, ASK YOURSELF - AM I STRONGER ALREADY? NOT ONLY THAT, BUT KNOW THAT THE ADDED OMEGA-3'S THAT YOU WILL BE CONSUMING ALREADY, AND IN LARGER AMOUNTS FROM TODAY, WILL IMPROVE YOUR SKIN TONE AND SOFTNESS, YOUR HAIR SHEEN AND TEXTURE AND A MYRIAD OF OTHER BENEFITS. MAKE A NOTE OF THE IMPROVEMENTS YOU HAVE SEEN SO FAR. REMEMBER TO KEEP ON TAKING YOUR VITABIOTICS OSTEOCARE PLUS.

Featuring Selenium, Omega-3 and Calcium

Day One

Breakfast: 2 oz flaked salmon in 2 egg omelette with 1 slice rye toast, Pear, 1-2 cups white tea

Lunch: 1 hummous or tahini and salad leaf wrap (V) (If buying ready-made save second half of wrap for mid-afternoon snack)

Dinner: 1 medium slice (6 – 8 oz) butternut squash and feta cheese bake together with artichoke hearts and olive salad (V) (R)

Day Two

Breakfast: 1 cup oat or millet flake porridge with 10 mixed hazlenuts and pecans, 1 ½ cups cow's milk or rice milk

Lunch: 1 medium toasted mozzarella and tomato pitta or ciabatta panini, green salad

Dinner: 1 large bowl (400 – 500 gm) clam chowder or mulligatawny soup with barley and mixed peppers (V) (R)

Day Three

Breakfast: 2 scrambled eggs with chives on 1 slice toasted wholewheat bread, 1 nectarine, 1 cup green tea

Lunch: 1 large bowl (400 – 500 gm) Thai-style chicken soup (may be ready-made, heated and stored in a thermos) with raw vegetable crudifés – celery, carrots and mange tout

Dinner: 2 cups seafood risotto with raw sliced fennel and apple salad (V) (R)

Day Four

Breakfast: 'Everything-in-it' smoothie with 2oz jumbo oats, 2tsp ground sesame seeds, 1 banana, 4 oz blueberries and 1 cup almond or soya milk

Lunch: Medium prawn salad (4 oz) with new potatoes, mixed leaves and honey and caraway seed dressing (V)

Dinner: 2 large marinated tofu or tempeh skewers with 1 cup wild rice and 1 -2 cups sautéed oriental cabbage in garlic and ginger (V) (R)

Day Five

Breakfast: 1 small or ½ large pot plain bio yoghurt pot with 1 cup toasted granola, 2 tsp pumpkin and sunflower seeds, added fresh fruit, 1 -2 cups white tea

Lunch: 8 oz carpaccio of beef or fish (salmon, sea bass, tuna or halibut) with rocket and parmesan salad, 1 slice rye bread

Dinner: 6 oz baked tuna steak (cover with parchment paper or silver foil) with spring onions, cherry tomatoes and fennel, 1 cup wheat or barley couscous (V) (R)

Day Six

Breakfast: 2 boiled eggs with 1 slice rye toast, 1 apple, 1 -2 cups nettle tea

Lunch: Medium baked potato with 3 – 4 oz tuna, tomato, butter beans and onions, ½ bag mixed green salad, olive oil and lemon dressing

Dinner: 1 small roasted poussin (baby) chicken with sage and lemon, 6 – 8 asparagus spears and 1 cup mashed potato

Day Seven

Breakfast: 1 large or 2 small buckwheat blinis with smoked salmon and sour cream, orange, fennel tea

Lunch: 2 oz Ricotta cheese, 3 oz lentils, handful baby spinach, celery and pear salad with 6 – 8 cashews and olive oil, tahini, lemon and caraway seed dressing. (V) (R)

Dinner: Medium sliced (7oz – 8oz) turkey breast schnitzel with 2 cups roasted root vegetables (parsnip, carrots, swede)

Week 4

WEEKLY MOTIVATOR

EVEN IF YOU ARE ALREADY A HEALTHY EATER, YOU HAVE PROBABLY EATEN IN BETTER BALANCE OVER THE LAST THREE WEEKS THAN IN A LONG TIME. THE COMBINATION OF THE NUTRIENTS YOU HAVE BEEN EATING WILL HAVE POSITIVELY AFFECTED EVERY PART OF YOUR BODY. NOW LOOK AT THE FINER DETAILS FOR THE PROOF - STRONGER NAILS, HEALTHY GUMS, BETTER MUSCLE TONE IN LEGS, ARMS AND ABS. DON'T STOP NOW – THIS IS ONLY THE START OF WHAT YOU CAN ULTIMATELY ACHIEVE. HAVING A STRONG FRAME IS VITAL FOR LIFE AND HEALTH.

Featuring Magnesium, Manganese, Vitamin D and Omega-3

Day One

Breakfast: 1 cup apple juice soaked bircher muesli with oats and buckwheat flakes , apricots, peaches, and plums, 1 cup cow's milk or soya milk, 1 cup green tea

Lunch: 1 cup chicken risotto with mixed green bean salad (edemame beans, peas and broad beans) in olive oil and lemon dressing

Dinner: 2 egg Spanish-style omelette with potato, leeks, onions, mixed peppers and olives, green salad

.....

Day Two

Breakfast: 1 small or ½ large pot Greek style yoghurt pot with 3 oz granola and 1 cup fresh berries, 1-2 cups dandelion tea

Lunch: 1 large bowl (or whole prepared carton 400 gm – 500 gm) Tuscan bean soup with 2 slices or 1 roll wholemeal bread, 1 apple

Dinner: Whole small roasted sea bass with rosemary and fennel, 1 cup wild rice and 1 cup curly kale (V) (R)

.....

Day Three

Breakfast: 2 poached eggs on 1 slice rye toast with optional 3 oz smoked ham or haddock, 1 pear, 1-2 cups white tea

Lunch: 8 piece sushi box with pickled ginger and celery and apple salad (V) (may buy larger box and save 4 or 5 pieces sushi for afternoon snack)

Dinner: Ricotta and spinach wholewheat cannelloni (2 large or 3 small) with béchamel sauce and large green salad

Day Four

Breakfast: 'Everything-in-it' smoothie with 2 oz oats, tahini, 1 banana, 1 kiwi fruit and 2 tsp. sunflower seeds, 1 cup cow's milk or soya milk, 1 -2 cups nettle tea

Lunch: 2 - 3 slices turkey breast, ½ bag rocket and spinach leaves, and 1 tsp pine nuts salad with 4-5 cherry tomatoes, olive oil and lemon dressing

Dinner: 4 – 5 large Madagascan prawns and 1 cup shredded Chinese cabbage with corn and caraway seed fritters (V) (R)

.....

Day Five

Breakfast: 2 egg omelette with 2 oz Cheshire cheese, with fresh handful fresh parsley, apple, 1 - 2 cups white tea

Lunch: 1 large bowl (400 – 500 gm) lentil and tomato soup with 1 slice wholemeal or rye bread, peach or nectarine (V)

Dinner: 1 large or 2 small baked red peppers with 1 cup wild rice, 2 tsp. pine nuts and courgette stuffing (V) (R)

.....

Day Six

Breakfast: 2 cups poached mixed fruits (apples, pears and apricots with stem ginger, nutmeg and cinnamon with 1 small, or ½ large pot Greek-style yoghurt, 1 tsp. toasted almonds and 1 tsp sunflower seeds, 1 - 2 cups peppermint tea (R)(V)

Lunch: 1 small or ½ medium broccoli and stilton quiche with ½ bag mixed leaf salad, olive oil and lemon dressing

Dinner: 6 - 7 oz roasted saddle of venison with 2 cups roasted mixed root vegetables and 1 cup mashed potato

Day Seven

Breakfast: 2 scrambled eggs with 4oz wilted baby spinach on 1 slice wholewheat toast, pear, 1-2 cups nettle tea

Lunch: 1 large bowl (400 gm - 500gm pot ready prepared carton) mixed vegetable soup with barley, 1 wholewheat roll (V)

Dinner: 7 oz - 8 oz Cajun-style salmon steak with tomato, mango and avocado wedges with 1 cup fennel seed rice (V) (R)

Please note:

These 4 week meal plans can be switched around throughout the 12 week time period in any order that you wish.

Additional Weekly Motivators

Week Five

Make sure to keep yourself (and your taste-buds) challenged by varying your weekly foods – don't choose your 'favourite week' from the 4-week meal planners and repeat that one week every week – your body (and your bones!) need the range of foods and nutrients to fully satisfy ALL your nutritional needs.

Week Six

If you haven't already cut out coffee, or you are still having more than one per day, make this the week to 'Cut the Caffeine!' Research shows that urinary calcium levels are noticeably increased just three hours after drinking coffee – why waste all the good sources of calcium from your foods by having to finish your meal with a coffee? Choose peppermint, fennel or chamomile teas instead, which are all beneficial for digestion.

Week Seven

Remember that sunlight is vital for the utilisation of vitamin D – and the sun is shining, even if hidden behind cloud! Make sure to walk part of the way to or from work every day this week to boost your natural levels of vitamin D. Know that eggs and oily fish are both great natural sources of vitamin D, so increase your intake of either of these protein sources this week.

Week Eight

Make this week the one to experiment with alternative wholegrains to give yourself the best overall range of bone-building nutrients – try quinoa (cook as for rice), buckwheat (great for savoury pancakes) barley (to fill out casseroles and soups) and millet flakes (in muesli and added to oats for porridge) – you'll find a wealth of different textures, and the bonus of increased energy!

Week Nine

Many women are magnesium deficient and, if you are suffering from stress right now, you need to increase your dietary intake of this calcium dependent mineral. Dark green leafy vegetables contain the highest amounts so this week, include at least one portion of curly kale, Savoy cabbage, watercress, or chard daily, either fresh in salads, pureed in soups, or sautéed with (or without) garlic.

Week Ten

Repeated research shows that the isoflavones (one of the phyto-oestrogen compounds) from soya products may increase bone density, and protect against bone loss. If you already consume soya foods fairly regularly (2-3 x per week) then you are doing well, but you don't need to eat them daily to get the benefits. If you never usually eat soya foods such as soya milk, tofu, tempeh or miso soup, try one or two of these foods this week to see if they suit your palate.

Week Eleven

You must have noticed an improvement in your strength by now – especially in your weight training! Challenge yourself this week by including one group of foods that you have been avoiding assiduously throughout the Challenge! Whether its increasing your range of vegetables, or including grains, increasing your consumption of oily fish, or trying one of the recipes you have been bypassing, just **DO IT THIS WEEK!**