



“My priority was never to lose weight and be a size 8, it was to have a healthy baby”

Edwina, 39, Nurse educator

ULTIMATE HEALTH GOAL
Have a healthy baby

After years of trying to conceive without success, Edwina decided things had to change. “My husband and I had been trying for a baby for five years, with help from an endocrinologist and dietitian. But we were still having miscarriages, which was put down to my BMI being over 30,” explains Edwina.

Frustrated and fed up, she turned to the internet for quick fixes, but this only left her more confused. “I self-medicated with supplements and went on fad diets, such as drinking celery juice, in an attempt to lose weight and fall pregnant,” she recalls. “Everything I read on the internet was contradictory and, in turn, nothing worked!”



At the age of 18, Edwina was told she had polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) but it wasn't until more than a decade later that she was diagnosed with stage four endometriosis and an endometrioma in one of her ovaries. She had surgery and the operation was difficult. Edwina felt her dream of being a mum slipping away.

In an attempt to take a different approach, Edwina set out to find a dietitian whose ethos matched her own. “I connected with fertility dietitian Stefanie Valakas on Instagram (@thedietologist), shortly after the surgery in 2018. She helped me shift my focus



After five years of trying, Edwina (with husband and daughter, left, and sister, below left) finally achieved her family goals with the advice of a fertility dietitian.

EDWINA'S top three tips FOR A FERTILITY-FOCUSED DIET

- 1 Cook with extra-virgin olive oil, using it abundantly rather than sparingly.
- 2 Consume more healthy omega-3 fats, found in oily fish and walnuts, and enjoy a wide variety of fruit and vegetables.
- 3 Take a really good pre-natal vitamin – a fertility dietitian can recommend one that's right for you.



away from weight loss and towards optimising my overall health instead.” Realising weight loss was not the be all and end all was the change Edwina needed. “My priority was never to lose weight and be a size 8, it was to have a healthy baby.”

Edwina worked closely with Stefanie to make dietary changes to support a healthier lifestyle, all the while optimising her egg quality. She ate more fruit and veg, and included good quality extra-virgin olive oil, nuts, seeds and customised supplementation to her diet. Even her husband made positive changes to his diet to support their fertility journey by reducing his caffeine intake.

Edwina ended up conceiving in June 2019, which resulted in another miscarriage. She conceived again in October 2019, and now has a healthy 18-month-old daughter, Alexandra. “Without changing from a restrictive low-fat food approach for weight loss to a more holistic approach for good health, my baby girl wouldn't be here today.”

Edwina and her husband want to expand their family but, as she approaches 40, she knows time is not on her side. However, she's hopeful their dietary and lifestyle changes will put them in the best position to fall pregnant again. “Even if it doesn't occur, I know Stefanie's recommendations are supporting not just hormonal health, but our general health and wellbeing for the long term.”

Edwina says seeking advice from a fertility dietitian has provided an unexpected bonus. “By changing how and what we eat, I now realise I'm setting up life-long, healthy habits for my daughter, which is an incredible feeling.”

Should you see a dietitian?

Want to make changes to how you eat? First of all, you're in the right place! *HFG* is packed with expert advice to help you get healthier and stay that way. But if you're looking for personalised advice, it might be worth making an appointment to see an accredited practising dietitian.

Many people think dietitians only help people who want to lose weight. While they do deal with weight loss, dietitians help all kinds of people – of all ages, genders, nationalities and financial circumstances – with a range of goals. This could be having more energy, coping with uncomfortable tummy issues, preventing or recovering from illness, having a healthy baby or just growing old gracefully. To find a dietitian, visit dietitiansaustralia.org.au or ask your GP for recommendations. [hfg](#)