

WHO

Valerie Wee

THE GOAL **More pep in my long workdays**

Working 13-hour days has left me feeling tired through the day. I'm also exercising five times a week as I hope to complete a marathon next year.

THE CONSULTATION

→ **Expert** Jaclyn Reutens, dietitian at Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants

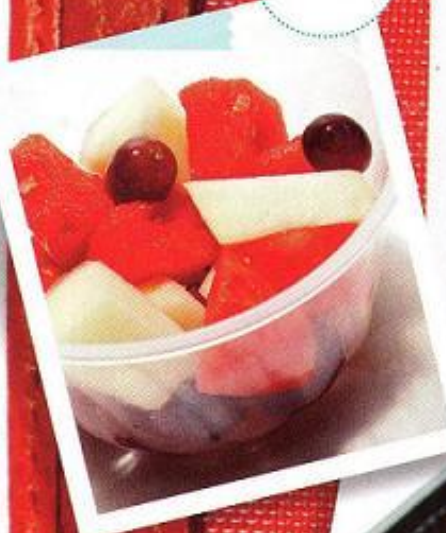
The first appointment began with the routine form-filling and measurements to record my weight, height, allergies, eating habits and so on. Jaclyn told me that my BMI was about 18, which meant that I was underweight.

She quizzed me further on my sleeping patterns, daily routine and diet. Her calculations showed that my daily calorie intake was about 1,300kcal, and my diet lacked sufficient protein and carbohydrates to match my activity level. From my medical history, she inferred that I was a little low in iron. I also lacked sleep, clocking just six hours a night. With all these and my work schedule in mind, Jaclyn tailor-made a diet plan for me that would be easy to follow.

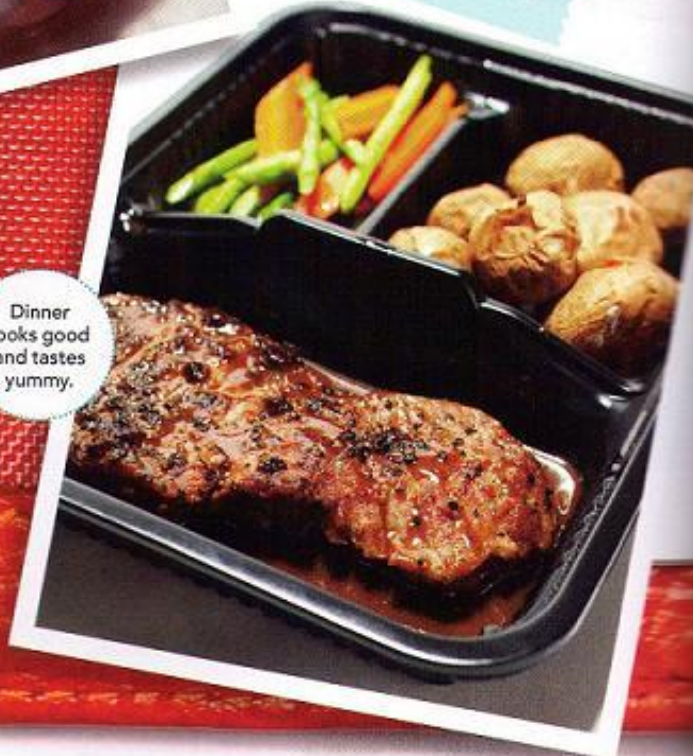
The main goal of the diet was to gradually increase my calorie intake to 1,800kcal (and ultimately 2,000kcal) by eating more carbohydrates and protein. This would support my busy (and somewhat stressful) lifestyle and thrice-weekly 8km runs, and also help me put on weight and give me more energy throughout the day. To add more iron to my diet, she suggested a nutritious snack like a muesli bar and Milo (my favourite), which is high in iron and vitamin B. On the whole, I had to eat three main meals and three nutritious snacks a day. She also stressed that I needed more sleep in order to complement her meal plan.



The diet includes lots of fruits.



Dinner looks good and tastes yummy.



FOLLOWING THE PLAN

day 1

BREAKFAST Bowl of high fibre cereal

with soya milk and yogurt with fruits

LUNCH Braised chicken with black fungus, tofu, stir-fried mustard greens, seafood vegetable soup, brown rice and fruits

SNACK Isotonic drink

DINNER Black pepper sirloin steak, grilled asparagus and carrots, with baked baby new potatoes and fruits

→ **Notes** It takes only 10 minutes to eat breakfast, but it makes me feel like a champion at work. Aptima delivers at meal times, so the food is prepared and served fresh. All meals show the calories and nutritional data of the food. It's good to eat with awareness. Dinner looks good and tastes yummy.

day 2

BREAKFAST Slice of wholemeal bread

LUNCH Prawn with celery and cashew nuts, beancurd with black

TODAY

pepper sauce, stir-fried chye sim, vegetable soup, brown rice and fruits

SNACK Milo

DINNER Pan-fried cod with lemon sauce, aglio olio (wholemeal spaghetti), salad and fruits

→ **Notes** I feel sleepy in the afternoon. Clocking less than five hours of sleep last night doesn't help either. Can't finish my lunch. The salad for dinner is a delicious toss of capsicums, purple and green cabbage, red onions, arugula and tomato. Yum! I'm supposed to cut my ice cream intake by half as it's mainly bad sugar, but I've succumbed.

day 3

BREAKFAST Fruit

LUNCH Stir-fried beef with teriyaki sauce, tofu with yellow bean and ginger, spinach with mushrooms, fish ball soup, brown rice and fruits

DINNER Grilled prawns, scallops, fish, squid, pan-fried broccoli, boiled cauliflower, brown rice and fruits

→ **Notes** Still feeling lethargic. The work schedule is heavier these two days. I don't finish both my lunch and dinner. Jaclyn suggests I eat a banana in the afternoon to boost energy levels and tells me to sleep more. Feeling a bit guilty about not following the diet plan properly, but will compensate by going to bed before midnight!

day 4

BREAKFAST Cereal, fruit and a bun

LUNCH Steamed fish with fermented black bean sauce, sweet and sour tofu, stir-fried vegetables, Chinese seaweed soup, brown rice and fruits

SNACK Banana, nuts and a char siew bun

DINNER BBQ boneless chicken leg, wholemeal pasta with arrabiata sauce, salad with fruits.

→ **Notes** Feeling slightly perkier through the day, but starting to really crave for Japanese food at dinner time. I satisfy my craving by eating a lot of sashimi instead. My hungry flat-mate offers to help out and polishes off my dinner swiftly. I go to bed early.

day 5

BREAKFAST Milo

LUNCH Steamed chicken with red dates, wolfberries, braised tofu with Asian spices, stir-fried vegetables, vermicelli soup, brown rice and fruits

SNACK Banana, cupcake and dark chocolate

DINNER Wholemeal beef tortilla wrap with grilled French beans and carrots, and fruits

→ **Notes** I'm feeling really bright-eyed and bushy-tailed – perhaps it's a potent cocktail of a good diet, observing regular eating times and the imminent arrival of the weekend. TGIF I say.

THE VERDICT

It may seem like common sense, but just being put through a diet, learning to eat at regular times and getting enough sleep really helps me pull through the day better. I'm glad that I did not have to sacrifice too much to eat for my health, as the Aptima diet is tasty and varied. It was not easy to consciously stop work for meals and snacks, but the result is well worth the effort. Having lunch and dinner delivered to my doorstep helped me cultivate good eating habits.

WHERE TO GO

Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants (www.aptima-nsc.com) offers personalised diet consultations (\$120 first session, \$100 thereafter) and meal delivery services (\$40 for two meals).