

## Powered by Plants

**T**his month, after your questions on how I keep enough energy to ski race, look after a family and run a number of businesses, I thought I would write a bit about my healthy eating lifestyle. Obviously, it's all down to my plant based diet and northern grit.

Incredibly, 25 years on and there are still some people out there who believe you can't get enough protein from a plant based diet. Well, let's clear up those misconceptions.

### PROTEIN MYTH

I have been athletic since a young age, but staying fit and healthy has not been easy. When I was younger, I (like most others) believed the huge marketing campaigns by the meat and dairy industry targeting our schools that they were the best sources of protein and calcium.

Many years on and we know, as it is scientifically-proven, that a high consumption of meat contributes to increasing the risk of cancer, diabetes, heart disease and food borne illnesses. If that's not enough to put you off and you are male reading this, how about erectile dysfunction?!

### RECOMMENDED AMOUNTS

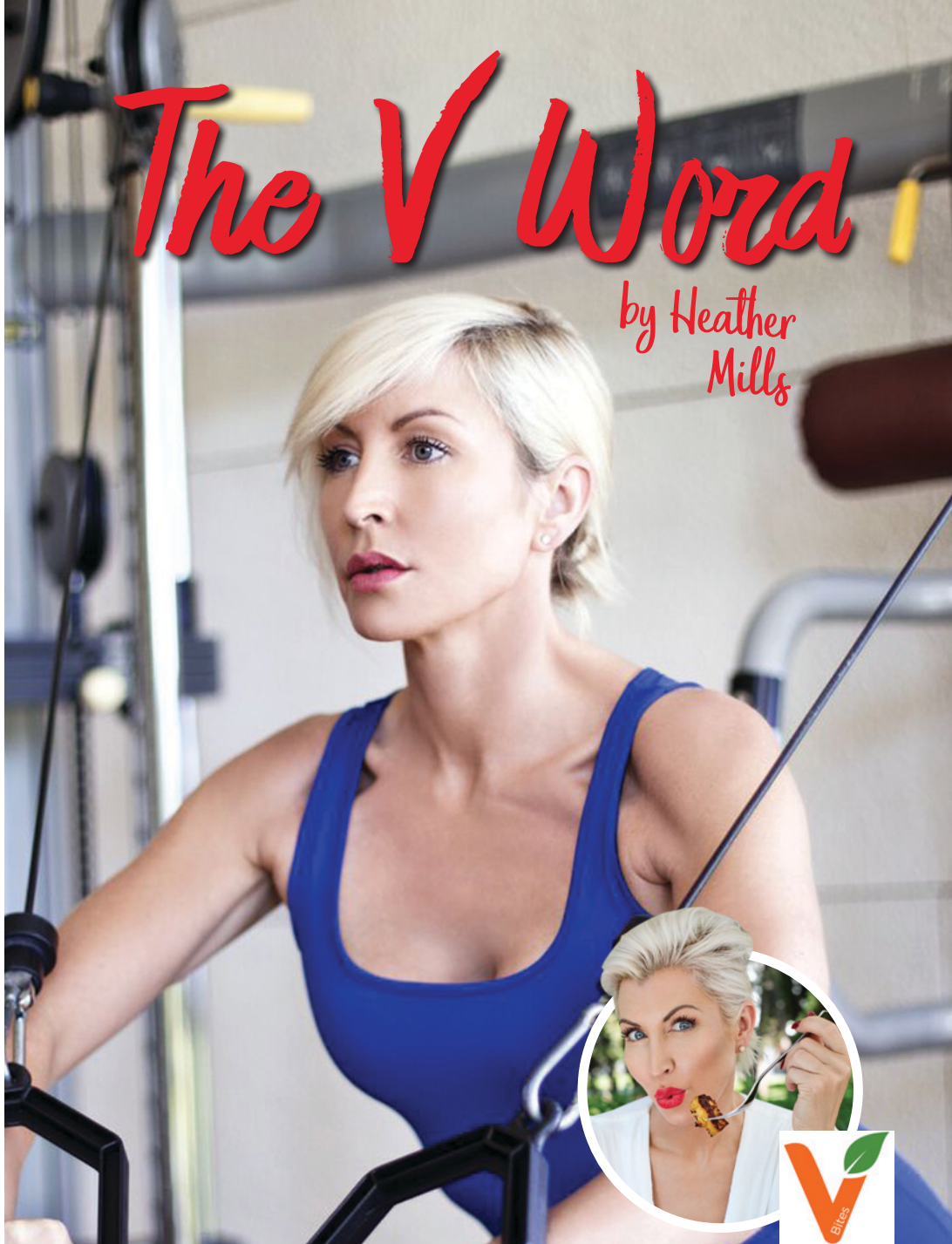
For an active athlete, the ideal amount of protein is 1 gram per pound of weight, but the body can live and survive on a lot less. The Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA), which is the minimum amount you need to be healthy, is 0.8 grams per kilogram (0.36 grams per pound) of body weight per day — 46 grams for an average woman. That equals as little as 10 per cent of your daily calories.

Ignore all the high protein, no carb diets if you are active. I live off of 1.5g of carbohydrates per pound per day, something that is higher than my protein intake. It is only if you need to lose weight and are lethargic that you will need to cut your complex carbohydrates. However, despite them being complex carbohydrates do not cut out green vegetables.

### FATS

Regarding fats, these are essential for many reasons, but on a superficial level it makes my skin feel amazing and I have at least 3 grams per pound per day.

Amongst the healthy fats I eat, I love avocado, nuts, olives, coconut and flaxseeds. I eat an avocado with my VBites fish fingers most days and the first comment out of most people's mouths is: "Oh, is that not high in fat?!" I always cook with coconut oil and keep extra virgin oil not for heating, but for using in salads or drizzling over my houmous.



# The V Word

by Heather Mills

Why do I cook with coconut oil? All oils and fats have a 'smoke point' — a temperature at which they oxidise, or essentially burn. Once oils hit that point and begin to let off blue-ish smoke, it's a sign that any antioxidants in the oil are getting zapped and potentially cancer-causing free radicals quickly form.

Whilst the exact smoke point of each oil varies based on the means of production and brand, coconut oil tends to have a higher smoke point than extra virgin olive oil, butter and some unrefined oils from nuts and seeds (like safflower, walnut and flaxseed oil). So save the flaxseed oil and yummy walnut oils for drizzling cold.

### BE INSPIRED

If you're still not convinced that you can eat plant based and be at your physical peak, check out

some of the top vegan athletes in the world and you will see that they have no trouble getting the protein or nutrients needed to thrive. There are hundreds of amazing athletes, but some of my favourites are: vegan ultra-marathon runner Fiona Oakes, snooker player Neil Robertson, racing driver Andy Lally, martial arts fighter Mac Danzig, bodybuilder Alexander Dargatz, and endurance athlete Dr. Ruth Heidrich. Enjoy their inspiring stories.

It's never too late to start looking after yourself and I promise you that once you are doing it, it will become a healthy addiction.

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