

# Wedding day weight wishes: Lose more than 20 pounds

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Order flowers, invitations, band and food, rent a reception hall, plan the honeymoon and buy a wedding dress. And drop more than 20 pounds before the big day.

That last mission is on the minds of more than 70 percent of brides-to-be, reports a new Cornell study. And more than one-third of them use such extreme measures as diet pills, fasting or skipping meals to achieve their desired wedding-day weight.

Of women surveyed who had already bought their bridal gowns, 14 percent purposely bought a wedding dress one or more sizes smaller than their then-current dress size.

"Most women engaged-to-be-married idealize a wedding weight much lighter than their current weight," reports Lori Neighbors, Ph.D. '07, now an assistant professor of nutrition at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. She conducted the study with 272 engaged women, working with her mentor, Jeffery Sobal, Cornell professor of nutritional sociology in Cornell's College of Human Ecology, while she was a graduate student at Cornell.

The study will be published in a forthcoming issue of the journal *Appetite*.

In the study, 91 percent of the women wanted to either lose weight (70 percent of the total) or prevent weight gain (21 percent), compared with

national data showing that 53 percent of women in a similar age range want to lose weight and 9 percent want to avoid gaining weight.

"Thus, it appears that an upcoming wedding may lead more women to engage in weight-management efforts than they otherwise would," Neighbors said.

Drinking water was the most common weight-loss technique (almost 80 percent used it) by brides-to-be used, followed by aerobic exercise and eating less. National data indicates that only 34 percent of women trying to lose weight and 23 percent trying to avoid weight gain report using water as a weight-loss strategy.

"It is not clear whether women are using this particular strategy to increase feelings of fullness, avoid the consumption of other foods or displace higher calorie beverages," said Sobal.

The average idealized weight for all the engaged women was 16 pounds less than their then-current weight. Of women who wanted to lose weight, their average desired weight loss was 23 pounds; 40 percent used at least one extreme weight control behavior and 25 percent used two or more.

"While this study suggests that weight is an important aspect of wedding appearance for women in this sample, nutrition and/or exercise interventions tailored to women preparing for their wedding may be beneficial to discourage the use of extreme weight loss behaviors and promote healthy, long-term weight management during the transition into marriage," said Neighbors.

Source: Cornell University

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