

# The read

with Peta Fuller | fullerp@qst.newsltd.com.au



There I was trying to run a wellness company and I couldn't get out of bed.

BODYLOVE OWNER/FOUNDER INGRID ARNA



## Well away from the diet world

**WAKE-UP CALL:** Ingrid Arna is on track with Bodylove at Paddington. Picture: CHRIS MCCORMACK

**B**RISBANE'S Ingrid Arna knows the perils of the high life.

A former New York model, Arna had overcome the eating disorder, anorexia nervosa, and found success with her celebrity-endorsed positive clothing company, Bodylove, but was still run-down and depressed.

"There I was trying to run a wellness company and I couldn't get out of bed," Arna says. "I thought 'what am I doing to myself? I have to change'."

She was working ridiculous hours in getting her company off the ground.

"I was literally conditioned; you have to go hard, knock on every door, *ra ra ra*," Arna says.

"I'd already gotten over my eating disorder but then I think I had another problem... and that's going at a thousand miles an hour."

**ROLE MODEL:** A FORMER HIGH-FLIER WANTS TO HELP WOMEN STEER CLEAR OF THE BODY ABUSE SHE KNEW SO WELL

While Arna worked hard getting her company up and running in New York, furiously networking and gaining celebrity kudos from the likes of Kate Winslet and Liv Tyler, the workload almost became too much.

"I thought if I didn't have a corporation, was living in New York city, the high life, then I wouldn't be respected or loved," she said.

A diagnosis of adrenal failure sparked a desire to study nutrition and eating psychology. And since her turnaround, the 36-year-old is passionate about getting women to prioritise the things that make them happy, including eating.

Arna says while it's not about having *carte blanche* to scoff that jumbo-sized packet of chips or head to Maccas because you love a

chicken nugget, her philosophy involves letting go the fear of food so many women develop over a lifetime.

"In some ways it can make women feel a little scared almost because they think if I have pleasure, I won't stop eating... I'm going to eat a whole punnet of ice cream," Arna says.

"That's not the case because when you really take away the fear of food, and you have that sense of pleasure, you slow down, you really enjoy it and you might have half a bowl of ice cream and you stop."

She advocates limiting carbohydrates and sugar, similar to many of the popular Hollywood celebrity eating regimes, but Arna says that's not what she's aiming for.

"It's not the Atkins diet, it's just about eating good fats,

superfoods to nourish the body," she says.

"I'm just saying not carbs three times a day."

She says green leafy vegetables, avocado, salads, fish, chicken and grass-fed beef are all top choices.

For carbohydrates, a sprouted bread or sweet potato are good options.

She says eating fats to lose fat is something her clients struggle with, but she believes sticking to low-fat foods won't help lose kilos.

Also it's not about saying no to everything all the time.

"If you stick to this way of living 80 per cent of the time and you want to go out with your friends and have a burger, then fine," she says.

"My philosophy is learning to really eat five to six meals a day, really good foods that are fat-burning foods that

really nourish the body, that give you energy."

She also advocates virgin coconut oil to be used during cooking.

"It doesn't become unstable when heated, it is a saturated fat but it's a medium chain fatty acid so it breaks down in the system differently," she says. These are the foods she credits with helping her restore energy levels and revive her joy for eating.

"You can have that sense of pleasure because your body's feeling nourished, you're not having mood swings, you're not on a starvation diet," she says.

Arna knows what skipping meals and constant dieting can do to women.

In her quest to have the requisite '90s catwalk figure, that super-thin waif look a la Kate Moss, she tried every-

thing, developing an eating disorder in the process.

"I was living on basically diet coke, cigarettes, coffee, a little bit of fruit in the morning with a little bit of yoghurt," Ingrid says.

"I thought I was being so healthy," she says.

Moving to New York in 1995 at 20 years of age, coping with the competitive modelling industry only made the years she had already spent dieting worse. It pushed her to take diet pills, something she warns clients about.

"I'd say don't do it because it might make you thin for a while but it will wig you out," she says.

"I lived on caffeine and a bit of sugar and, yes, I got thin for a moment but my adrenal system was spent."

Her wake-up call came when she was misdiagnosed with cancer at 24.

A growth in her uterus had caused bloating and sur-

## CONNECT WITH INGRID

For recipes, plenty of interviews with authors on nutrition or to connect with Ingrid Arna, you can head to her blog at [www.mybodyloveblog.com](http://www.mybodyloveblog.com) or via Facebook and Twitter.



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**HEALTHY FOCUS:** Bodylove aims to help women love their food.



**CATWALK CAPER:** Ingrid Arna in her modelling days.

gery was needed to remove what was fortunately a benign lump.

"I almost lost my life ... I haemorrhaged during the operation," she says.

"I honestly believe it was like life kicking me in the arse saying 'Are you going to get it?'. I've learnt and I've learnt the hard way."

Now she has serious concerns about the impact of the dieting industry.

"We should not be dieting, we should be eating great food that's good for us. If food comes in a sachet as a diet product then you don't want to be on it," she says.

"Food is medicine but it's only medicine if you eat the right foods."

Arna says it's no replacement for those who need actual pharmaceuticals, but it certainly helps to focus on the best foods available.

An avocado or broccoli might not top your list of

### TOP FOOD

- Green leafy vegetables
- Seeds
- Occasional nuts
- Olive oil, not heated
- Coconut oil
- Eggs
- Avocado
- Raw cacao
- Fish
- Chicken
- Grass-fed beef
- Sweet potato

### CHOICES

favourite snacks, but Arna says feeding your body the right foods has benefits.

"Once women know what those foods are they fall in love with them and the cravings go away," she says.

"Women are divine no matter whether you're a size 14 or size 8 - you can look great and feel great but you just need to know what to eat."

She says weight loss should never be the direct goal be-

cause it puts the body into stress mode.

"That's not the goal; the goal is health, the weight will come off," she says.

Arna's hard-won lessons are something she's determined to take to the world.

At present she's producing a radio show she hopes to sell called Love, Sex and Your Body.

A book is also in the works, entitled My Bodylove Revolution, to further expand the course she runs with clients.

"If it takes me five years, that doesn't really matter - maybe I'll have a baby, maybe not have a baby, but my health is my number one priority," she says.

"If all of these things happen then that's great but I would rather have a blast over the next few years and look after myself."

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