

Are You Beach Body Ready?

by
David Bretton

Fitness model and dentist **Rohan Verma** discusses how to get in shape for summer

‘Are you beach body ready?’

You may remember this controversial advertising campaign used by Protein World in 2015 that attracted a wave of online criticism. What is ‘beach body ready’? It’s a personal thing ... it’s when you are happy and confident to walk onto the beach and have a good time, without fear of others judging your appearance. Perhaps getting a ‘summer body’ has received criticism because some people associate this with unhealthy techniques such as missing meals, cutting out certain foods and spending hours on the treadmill. I met with dentist and fitness model Rohan Verma to discuss some of his thoughts.

David Bretton: If you could start by giving a bit of an insight into yourself, in relation to your dental life and fitness.

Rohan Verma: I’m 26 years old and I’m from Maidenhead, and a GDP who qualified in 2013 from the University of Bristol. I’m currently working for the MOD and am based in Pirbright Dental Barracks, treating the Army service personnel. I have since completed my MFDS and am approaching the end of my postgrad certificate in aesthetics at UCL Eastman.

I’ve always been involved in some form of fitness. As a youngster I played rugby union and kept it going right into university. I also learnt karate from the age of 7, placing nationally several times. It wasn’t until university that I discovered the ‘gym’. The nature of the dental undergraduate course made it difficult for me to partake in university rugby training, and by the third year of dentistry I was fed up with my ‘dad bod’. I found refuge in the weight room. For the next three years or so, I yo-yo’d in and out of my gym routines and diets. But in January 2015, I’d had enough of inconsistency, and set myself a goal of competing in May 2015 at a fitness model search called Fit Factor, and I placed third out of 500 entrants. I’ve since competed and placed in fitness shows, done many photo shoots and recently earned second in Britain in the men’s physique division



Photo of Rohan Verma ©Apasione



at the UKDFBA championships, Britain’s largest drug-tested bodybuilding show.

DB: With your work in the fitness industry, obviously it’s important to keep in good shape. How do you manage your work and fitness lives together?

RV: It’s a tough balancing act! To be very honest with you, there are days I’d rather go home after work and just chill, but I know that when I leave the gym, I feel distressed and refreshed, and I feel I’ve achieved something and pushed myself beyond my limits. I often hear the phrase, ‘I haven’t the time to cook and eat these meals and train four to six days a week.’ It drives me up the wall—not because everyone should do as I do, but because when people say ‘I can’t’, they’ve immediately introduced a mental barrier. I believe in consistency with respect to nutrition, lifestyle and fitness. That could mean eating three meals a day or five meals a day, playing football three times a week or weightlifting four to six days a week. Set a plan and stick to it, and you’ll reap the rewards both mentally and physically. So for me, rather than considering work and fitness as individual items, they together form a fundamental portion of my lifestyle.

DB: There is the saying, ‘Abs are made in the kitchen’. What are your thoughts on this;—how important is your diet in maintaining your physique?



RV: Nutrition is key. It's cliché, but it's 70 percent nutrition. I've tried many diets—no carbs after 6 p.m., ketogenic diets, IIFYM, carbohydrate cycling, intermittent fasting ... you name it, I've tried it. I've noticed that since I have maintained a consistent approach to my nutrition I've seen results in both my 'growth' and 'leaning down' phases. There is no set answer, no set diet, that gives you abs or the results you want to see. Whatever works for you—whatever you can maintain and enjoy and keeps you on the ball mentally and training hard is what you should stick to!

DB: What about carbohydrates? A negative attitude toward carbs has been popularised by shows such as *The Only Way is Essex*: 'No carbs before marbs.' What are your thoughts on carbs?

RV: Carbs = Life! I am by no means a nutritionist, but I've seen firsthand some ridiculously low-carb diets and how they can be detrimental to a person's health and physique. I'm sure a lot of people will say, 'But what about ketogenic diets—don't they work?' Yes, some people can see good results, but it's important to ensure

the remaining components of your diet—such as proper fat, water and protein intake—also are correct to achieve maximum results. Personally, I enjoy carbs. They fill me up, I can maintain a consistent approach to my work and training with carbs in my system, and they provide a feel-good factor for me.

DB: Do you have cheat meals? How often, and what are your favourite foods?

RV: I hate the term *cheat meal*, which implies you don't deserve the food. It gives your brain an unhealthy message, and I think it's for this reason people develop an unhealthy relationship with food. For me, these meals are *relaxed meals*. Like I said before, consistency with your nutrition is key, but one relaxed meal a week won't kill you and throw you completely off your plan.

In my offseason, when I'm not prepping for a competition or shoot, I'll have a relaxed meal each week—whatever I fancy. Regular relaxed meals curb my cravings and prevent me going overboard with 'cheat days', and they help when out socially. My favourites include sushi, Domino's pizza and good old Chinese.

DB: What is your workout regime like? How often do you train, and does your training differ coming up to summer or to a photo shoot?

RV: I am currently on a four-day rotation split: The first day I'll focus on my back; the next day chest and shoulders; then legs; then arms. After a rest day, I start all over. I like to train five to six times a week.

My training during the off-season and close to a photo shoot or a summer holiday differs minimally. If it's closer to a shoot or holiday I like to drop my rest period between sets from 60 seconds to 45 seconds to keep my heart rate a little higher, and I add in a few more drop sets and some cardio.

I like to keep my food intake high but my caloric output higher, to ensure I hit a calorie deficit and enter the fat-loss phase, while some others prefer to lower their caloric input and avoid doing cardio altogether.

For my cardio sessions I like to do steady-state cardio, like 20 minutes on the step machine or 45 minutes on the incline treadmill. I do these cardio sessions sometimes fasted, sometimes postgym, and if I am very close to a competition or photo shoot I'll do fasted cardio and postgym cardio.

DB: What are your top 5 tips to our readers?

RV: First, enjoy it. If you don't enjoy fitness, it will only become a chore and you won't want to stick at it!

Second, set yourself a goal. This helps keep me on track,

Third, calculate your macros. Online calculators or coaches can help with this.

Fourth, be consistent with your nutrition and training, because this is when you will see results.

Lastly, give it your everything! There will be moments you want to throw up, sit down or stay at home, but once you have completed that session, you're one step closer to attaining your goal! ■