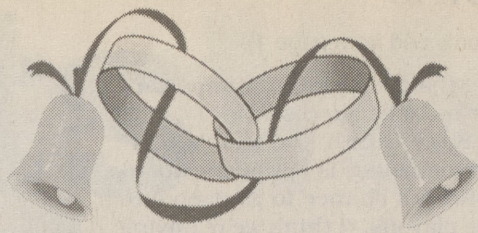


To Have and To Hold... A Wedding to Remember



Seek, and you'll find the perfect fit

By CHERYL WALKER
Copley News Service

It's the ultimate shopping trip, and one many young women dream about from the time they are little girls - the search for the perfect wedding gown.

But the dream bubble can easily burst once inside a department store fitting room. This is the time in a woman's life when not just any dress will do and it must fit perfectly.

Unfortunately, there is no such thing as the perfect body. What if the bride is too thin, too heavy, flat chested, too busty or big in the hips for the gown she has her heart set on? Shopping for a wedding gown is supposed to be a joyful experience, but it can quickly turn into a tearful episode when the bride-to-be tries to squeeze a size 14 body into a size 10 or 12 dress.

It doesn't matter if a woman is full-figured or skinny. There are many styles that are flattering, whether you are a slender waif or voluptuous bride.

"There's not any one particular hard-and-fast rule for shopping for a wedding gown," said Pam Venable, manager of

special occasions and sales at a West Coast Nordstrom store. "You simply work with the person and what's available."

A woman who is well-rounded should look for shops that carry samples in large sizes. She should also look for styles that avoid big puffy sleeves and yards and yards of fabric, which add pounds. Shop for the medium-weight fabrics.

"A bride who is trying to hide the pounds should look for something that fits loosely rather than tight-fitting," Venable said. "Especially if a woman has large hips, a tight fit will only accentuate it."

Princess-style dresses are a good choice for a full-figured woman. A square neckline can detract from a large bust and hips and sheer tapered sleeves can cover up large arms.

For the slender bride with a boyish figure, choose a dress that makes the most of the body. Off-the-shoulder dresses or those with a fitted bodice flatter the slender figure. To add more to the bustline, choose a corset-type top.

"Basically, a thin person can go with almost any style," Venable said. If she's small on

top she should look for a dress that has some padding in it. Many dresses are made with padded bras just like swimsuits.

Some brides may want to take a shot at changing their figure before the wedding by losing weight or working out to enhance a more shapely body. A year before the wedding (if you plan a wedding that far in advance) is a good time to start getting into shape. Take a good look in the mirror and decide what it is that you want. Set a goal of dropping a dress size, improving posture or toning up the body. Make sure the fitness and diet goals are realistic and work with your lifestyle and time frame.

If you choose to burn some calories to drop a few pounds before the big day, there are some things that can be added to the daily routine in addition to a regular workout.

While working at your desk, pull in your stomach and hold it for 10 seconds and then release. This helps burn extra calories while working and also helps when posing for full-length photos on the wedding day.

At lunchtime, take a walk around the mall. This way you can accomplish two things at once: do some shopping for wedding items while working off some calories.

Another suggestion is to take the stairs whenever possible. Oftentimes, people are in such a rush they head for the elevator, but before pushing that button think about the extra calories that are burned by taking a little more time to climb the stairs. This also gives the leg muscles a workout.

Once at the desired weight and dress size before the wedding, don't forget those last-minute emergencies that always seem to crop up before a special occasion. This is always the time when a woman is sure to have trouble with a broken nail, unmanageable hair, puffy red eyes, dark circles - or heaven forbid - a pimple.

Here are a few tips in dealing with life's little setbacks.

For puffy eyes, try staying away from salty foods. Cool compresses with ice cubes wrapped in a washcloth or cold cucumbers over the eyes are also helpful.

For dark circles, apply a light moisturizer and foundation around the eye area. Apply a green-tinted concealer in the darkened area to offset the bluish color, followed by a regular concealer. Dab the area lightly with translucent powder.

Chipped nails can really be a pain. Lightly buff with a nail file to smooth out the rough edges and put a little polish on the tip to strength the nail. Then put on a regular coat of polish -



With so many styles to choose from, there's a wedding gown that is sure to measure up to every bride's expectations for flattering her figure.

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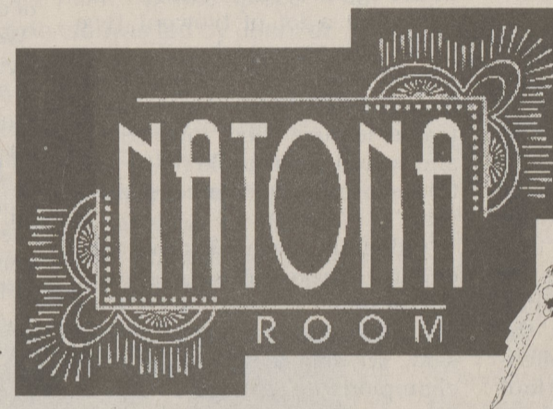


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