

ask the *panel*

Your one-stop shop for questions about fitness, nutrition, motivation and cooking. You ask, we answer!



Cooking

Lucy Kelly
Senior food editor



Nutrition

Emma Stirling
Nutrition editor



Fitness

Martha Lourey-Bird
Fitness editor



Motivation

Danielle Ritchie
Weight Watchers Leader

Q What's the difference between 'good fats' and 'bad fats'? How much good fat do I need to eat for a balanced, healthy diet?

Carly Lawson, Margaret River, WA

Emma Stirling replies

A Fats play an important role in helping your body properly absorb vitamins and also supply essential fatty acids.

Good fats in the diet – polyunsaturated (omega-3 and -6) and monounsaturated fats (omega-9) in controlled amounts are now praised by nutrition researchers for their many health benefits.

Bad fats – saturated and trans fats – should be avoided as they increase total and LDL blood cholesterol levels and are associated with heart disease. Reduce your saturated fat intake by opting for reduced-fat dairy products, trimmed and lean meats and skinless chicken. Plus, go easy on fried foods, certain treats, commercial cakes and biscuits.

Trans fats occur in small levels naturally in dairy products and meat, but the real concerns centre



around artificially occurring trans fats formed during the manufacture of some foods. These fats have been shown to increase the level of LDL or bad cholesterol in the blood, like saturated fats do. But uniquely, they also reduce HDL, or good cholesterol, so they have a doubly negative impact on your blood cholesterol levels, increasing your risk of heart disease.

As well as swapping to good fats and oils – from butter to a canola or vegetable oil-based spread, for example – you can also find them in foods like salmon and avocado. The *Weight Watchers Good Health Guidelines* recommend you aim for two teaspoons of healthy pouring oils a day, such as olive, safflower, sunflower, linseed or canola oils. However, these still need to be counted as part of your daily **POINTS** allowance.

Q How do you help motivate the people around you? I'm trying to encourage my sister to start making healthier choices.

Stephanie Kennedy, Adelaide, SA

Danielle Ritchie replies

A I'm sure you've heard the saying, 'You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink'. The same applies to our loved ones and friends. We can be very excited about the changes we've made in our lifestyles and feeling fantastic and more energetic as a result. Naturally, we want others to feel the same way too. But you can't force anyone to make these changes; they have to want to do it for themselves. The more you push, the more resistance you'll encounter.

All is not lost, though. You can motivate your sister by simply being an inspiration to her. The key is showing her how easy it is to lose weight. You can do this by living a full life at Goal, enjoying exercise and involving her in some fun activities too. Invite her over for dinner and cook out of the *Weight Watchers* cookbooks, or when you eat out together make healthy choices, but still include a treat from time to time. If your sister sees you still enjoying life and your favourite foods, she'll start asking you questions. Your energy and zest for life will soon rub off and your sister will eventually make the changes for herself. Persevere and be patient, it won't be long before she'll be joining you and living a healthier lifestyle too.

Q I would do anything to ensure my young children don't suffer from obesity like I have, however, I don't know what the 'right' thing to do is when it comes to exercise. Can you help?

Ann Fitzsimons, Manly, NSW

Martha Lourey-Bird replies

A Active parents are more likely to have active children, so you're a key figure here. The lifestyle choices you make are fundamental to the good health of your growing children. Children tend to do as you do rather than as you say, so the best example you can set is to get fit yourself – and let them see you enjoying it.

Create a supportive home environment and rethink the behaviour and attitude you display towards exercise. Turn negatives (“Oh no, the lift is broken, we have to use the stairs.”) into positives (“Great, we can walk up the stairs.”).

Remember that how you experience exercise as a child influences your involvement and/or perception of exercise as an adult, so make it fun!

Fit kid tips:

- Encourage gradual change – start small.
- Positive mindset – think 'active', not lazy.
- Up the exercise – make it fun, disguise the effort.
- Active presents – buy active toys for your children.
- Practice positive exercise – use exercise and activity as a reward, not a punishment.
- Walk and talk – make time to walk rather than drive.
- All for one – encourage the whole family to be active by doing things together.
- Television/computers – restrict screen time and ban electronics from the bedroom altogether.
- Curb negative messages – rethink the way you communicate about exercise and body image.
- Sport – promote positive participation as the main object and play down the competitive side.



If your letter to Martha is published, you'll win a pair of women's sports shoes from Rykä. Don't forget to tell us your shoe size when you write in to *Ask the Panel*, PO BOX 1961, North Sydney, NSW 2059, Australia or email editor@weightwatchers.com.au

Q How do you cook polenta and what are some different ways you can use it?

Helen Pointon, Speers Point, NSW

Lucy Kelly replies

A There are two ways to use polenta: as a soft creamy consistency similar to mashed potato; or allowed to set, when it can be grilled, baked or chargrilled. Polenta can be served with salad, meat or vegetable dishes.

To make either style, use one part polenta to four parts liquid. For example, you need two cups of liquid to cook every ½ cup of raw polenta. You can use water, stock or low-fat milk to make polenta, but need to adjust the **POINTS** values accordingly. Boil the liquid in a saucepan, then add the polenta gradually, stirring constantly over a low heat until thick.

For added flavour, stir in some parmesan or feta cheeses, spinach or semi-dried tomatoes. If you go for creamy-style polenta, serve it immediately. For firm polenta, pour the mix evenly into a lined tray and refrigerate until set. Cut into wedges or slices and grill before serving. Alternatively, you can also make chips with the firm polenta. Cut the set polenta into batons, place on a lined baking tray, spray with oil and roast for 25 minutes until golden brown in a 200°C or 180°C fan-forced oven, turning half way through. Serve with sea salt and cracked pepper to taste. Allow 1½ **POINTS** value per serve.



ask the panel

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