

ask the panel

We answer your questions about cooking, fitness, motivation and nutrition.



Cooking
Lucy Kelly

Senior Food Editor



Fitness
Martha Lourey-Bird

Fitness Editor



Nutrition
Emma Stirling

Nutrition Editor



Motivation
Ann Mennen

2008 Slimmer of the Year

If your letter to Lucy is published, you could win a prize. This issue's lucky letter writer receives a Tefal VitaCuisine Steamer, RRP\$159.95. For stockists, visit www.tefal.com.au or call (02) 9748 7944. Write to Ask the Panel, PO BOX 1961, North Sydney, NSW 2059



on motivation

Q What changed your attitude to get you off the couch and exercising regularly, and how did you stay motivated?

Ann Mennen replies

A I wanted a real life – to do stuff! Mark Twain famously said, “Denial ain’t just a river in Egypt”, but that’s exactly what I’d been doing most of life. If I wanted to experience it, I had to change – a lot!

The food part was relatively easy – all the information was delivered to me, but no one could move my body except me. ‘No excuses’ became my motto. The first days were tough. I only managed 10 minutes at a time, but I told myself if I could do 10 minutes without keeling over, I could do 15. I walked longer and faster every day, and it made a difference to my weight loss.

As bad as I was at maths, I worked

out the equation I needed for life: eating well + exercise = health.

In regards to motivation, I had been collecting success stories in a scrapbook for years and looked at it often. The common thread in all the stories is regular exercise. I added extra information such as for every half kilo of weight lost, 2kg of pressure is taken off your knees.

The hardest part for me was getting out the door. If I started to get bored, I changed the route or changed the exercise. I’d swim or go cycling.

The physical changes in my body have been incredible – now I know it is capable of doing amazing things.

on cooking

Q What is the best way to cook vegetables to make them interesting?

Louise, Elizabeth Downs, SA

Lucy Kelly replies

A Variety is the spice of life, so include vegies whenever you can. Fresh vegies are delicious steamed and tossed in a little warmed olive oil and crushed garlic or finely grated parmesan cheese. Try this with English spinach, green beans, broccoli or asparagus.

Vegies are also tasty roasted. Try combining a few at a time, such as potato, parsnip and beetroot or capsicum, tomato and eggplant. Spray them with olive oil and season with salt and pepper and some fresh or dried rosemary or oregano.

Mushrooms (either small whole or sliced) are fantastic pan-fried in a heated oil-sprayed non-stick frying pan with a little crushed garlic or Dijon mustard.

Some chopped fresh parsley or basil goes a long way to lift the flavour of most vegies as does a drizzle of good quality balsamic or red wine vinegar.

on nutrition

Q I've recently been diagnosed with coeliac disease and am wondering if there are any particular considerations for weight loss? *Fran, Crookwell, NSW*

Emma Stirling replies

A As you are aware, coeliac disease is a permanent intestinal reaction to gluten, the protein portion of wheat and other grains including rye, barley and oats. Gluten reacts with the small bowel lining, damaging it and causing flattening and inflammation, plus malabsorption of nutrients from food. The gold-standard diagnosis is by a bowel gastroscopy and biopsy.

People with coeliac disease must follow a gluten-free diet for life, which is rather complex as the key grains and their components with gluten are used widely as food ingredients. It's not as simple as just choosing gluten-free bread, pasta, pizza dough and biscuits. In the early months, a gluten-free diet can feel overwhelming as you need to sort through a lot of new food information. The great news is that there is a wealth of resources out there to help. Over time you will appreciate that the diet does not need to interfere with your enjoyment of delicious food or your healthy weight goals.

It's common for newly diagnosed people to be underweight due to prolonged gastrointestinal symptoms. However, once you follow a gluten-free diet, the symptoms should disappear and you may need to make further dietary adjustments to keep a healthy weight or prevent weight gain. According to dietitian Dr Sue Shepherd, "It is not difficult to choose highly nutritious low-kilojoule, gluten-free foods. People who are new to the gluten-free diet often overeat because they are busy trying new alternative foods. But a sensible approach to eating should ensure that unnecessary weight gain is prevented."

The Weight Watchers Satisfaction™ Plan can fit alongside your gluten-free diet as it is inclusive of all foods. Just make sure you consult with your health professionals along the way.

on fitness

Q I walk to work and back each day. The total exercise time is about 30 minutes five days a week. This is my only exercise. Should I try to incorporate some other form of exercise in my week?

Sue, Casula, NSW

Martha Lourey-Bird replies

A The 30 minutes of walking that you currently do five days a week is excellent and certainly enough to maintain a good level of fitness. However, our bodies do tend to plateau and become complacent if we continue to do the same exercise routine. Basically, we use less energy for the same activity as our bodies get used to it.

However, if your aim is to look and feel even better, you may be interested in trying something different. As you have the cardio side of things well covered with walking, consider including some resistance exercise as well. Muscle toning ideas include

abdominal crunches, squats, lunges and push-ups. You don't need any equipment and you can do them at the end of your walk home, when you are already warmed up. Do them every second day and try to increase the number you do as time goes on – this will prevent the plateau effect and stop you from getting bored.

As your weekends at present are inactive, try and use this time as an opportunity for something new on the exercise front. Spice things up a bit each weekend and try different activities such as bike riding, jogging or yoga. It's a great way to prevent a plateau as your body won't know what to expect next!



If your letter to Martha is published, you'll win a fabulously comfy 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

