



**Nutrition**  
**Emma Stirling**  
BSc, MND, APD



**Fitness**  
**Martha Lourey-Bird**  
MSPSc, BSpSc (ExSc)  
DipRT



**Cooking**  
**Lucy Kelly**  
Weight Watchers  
Senior Food Editor



**Motivation**  
**Amy Pullman**  
Weight Watchers  
Leader, South Auckland, NZ

# Ask the panel

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

If you have a question for a panellist, write to: *Ask the panel*, PO Box 1961, North Sydney, NSW 2059. Include the name of the panellist you wish to address (sorry, no personal replies) and if asking a fitness question, please include your shoe size.

## On nutrition

**Q** There's been a lot about trans fats in the news lately. Are they as dangerous as they're made out to be?  
ND, Erskineville, NSW



**A** **Emma Stirling replies:** Just when we started to feel OK again about including a little good fat in our diet, a new type of bad fat has arrived to scare us. When it comes to fats, there are the good types (mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated), the bad saturated sources and now the ugly, trans fat.

Types of trans fats occur naturally in small levels in dairy products and meat, but the real concerns centre around the artificially occurring variety formed during food manufacturing. Artificial trans fats have been shown to increase the level of low density lipoprotein (LDL or bad cholesterol) in the blood, just like saturated fats do. But uniquely, they also reduce high density lipoprotein (HDL or good cholesterol). So, they have a doubly negative impact on your blood cholesterol levels, increasing your risk of heart disease.

The concerns about trans fats are so strong in the US the New York Board of

Health has banned their use in restaurants and takeaways. There's also mandatory food labelling for supermarket products. There's been widespread calls for Australia and New Zealand to follow suit, but trans fat food labelling is currently only voluntary. The amount of trans fat in food must only be declared on the label if there's nutrition claims about cholesterol, polyunsaturated, mono-unsaturated fats; omega-3, omega-6 or omega-9 fatty acids. But Food Standards Australia New Zealand estimates trans fats make up only 0.6 per cent of the average Australian's food intake, compared to 2.2 per cent in the US.

How can you avoid trans fats? They're found in some margarines, snack foods, baked goods and fried foods. The words "partially hydrogenated" fats or oils in the ingredient listing can be an indication. You can also call the products' customer line to double check or choose Heart Foundation approved products with the Tick.

## On fitness

**Q** Do you have any advice for flattening my tummy? It's become my real trouble spot - ever since I had my baby, I can't get rid of my paunch.  
MC, Mackay, QLD

**A** **Martha Lourey-Bird replies:** Research shows a combination of diet and exercise is the best approach for successful weight loss. Unfortunately, you cannot specify exactly where you want the weight to come off. In fact, it often seems that "trouble spot" may be the first place you put weight on and the last place you take it off.

But, as far as the abdominal region goes, you can improve its appearance through various strategies.



## On cooking

**Q** What is the best way to store herbs so they aren't floppy within a day? The bunches you buy in the supermarket are so big and lots of recipes only call for a tablespoon or two – are there some you can or can't freeze?  
Kath Tاجر, via email



cover with a plastic bag and store in the fridge (best for basil and coriander). Herbs should last two to seven days in the fridge this way.

**A** **Lucy Kelly replies:** I store my fresh herbs unwashed, wrapped in paper towel in a sealed plastic bag in the refrigerator crisper (best for chervil, chives, mint, tarragon and thyme). Rosemary and sage are best stored in a sealed plastic bag in the fridge. Otherwise you can store herbs in a jug with water just covering the roots,

Some herbs can be frozen (best for dill, basil and parsley) by sealing small amounts in freezer bags and storing in rigid containers. Finely chopped herbs can also be put in ice-cube trays with half herb and half water. Or try using herbs in a tube from the supermarket, they last 3 months.



**If your letter to Lucy is published, you could win a prize. This issue's lucky letter-writer wins a Tefal VitaCuisine Steamer, RRP \$159.95. The Tefal Steamer range is available nationally from selected department and electrical stores. For stockists, please visit [www.tefal.com.au](http://www.tefal.com.au) or call (02) 9748 7944.**

Obviously, weight loss is the number one thing you can do by making positive changes to your lifestyle. Improving the food choices you make can help you reduce the overall weight you carry and the amount of visible body fat.

Exercise also plays a very important role here too. While cardio exercise will help your overall weight loss, traditional abdominal exercises (sit ups, crunches, etc) strengthen the muscles underneath the body fat, but won't change the actual appearance of your abdominals. The most effective exercise for that is a 'non-moving' exercise called the 'hover'. You can perform the 'hover' either on your knees (which is the easier version) or your toes when you get the hang of it. Keep forearms in contact with the floor, your back flat and lift your belly-button up towards your spine. Hold this position for as long as you

can and keep breathing. You can also perform a version of this in a seated position anytime throughout your day. I like to call it the "all-day tummy tuck". To get the hang of it, sit on a chair as you normally would; that is, with relaxed tummy muscles. Then tie a belt firmly around your waist. Breathe out and pull your belly-button in towards your back. The aim is to keep the tension off the belt by maintaining this correct posture for five full breaths, then release. Over time, work up to one minute or more. Once you've got the idea, this tummy tuck can be done at any point throughout the day - seated, standing, walking or exercising. Not only does it strengthen your abdominal muscles it dramatically improves your posture giving you the appearance of a tighter, flatter abdominal region instantly.



**If your letter to Martha is published, you'll win a fabulously comfy pair of women's sports shoes from Rykå. Don't forget to tell us your shoe size when you write in.**

## On motivation

**Q** I have made great progress with my weight loss to date with consistent losses every week, but now, just five kilos from my goal, I am struggling.  
LB, Auchenflower, Qld

**A** **Amy Pullman replies:** Well done on your success so far. I can totally relate to where you are at right now. For the past two years I had been struggling to get the last five kilos off myself. Then in February, this year, I decided it was time to do something about it. I had gotten a bit lazy with my tracking and had started to miss my weekly Meeting.

So, I basically went back to week one. I started weighing my portions, tracking and writing down all my BLTs (bites, licks and tastes). I started attending (and still do) my weekly Meeting. I also made a promise to my Members and told my husband and family what I was doing so I could get the support I needed. After my second week I plateaued for about four weeks. Had I not had the support from those around me, though, I think I would have thrown in the towel. But I just kept going - knowing, if I didn't, the weight wouldn't magically come off. And thank goodness I did, as now I have managed to lose those pesky five kilos, plus two more!

I really advise you to create what I call 'a toolbox'. In this I have all the things that get me through the tough times, including meetings, tracking, exercise, weighing, friends, re-reading my booklets and my rescue foods (those I turn to that I know are **POINTS** friendly). This way you can look into your 'toolbox' and depending on what you need to work on, just pick one out. When in doubt - just ask your leader.

