



**Cooking**  
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**Nutrition**  
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**Fitness**  
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Fitness editor



**Motivation**  
Lorraine Isola  
Weight Watchers  
Leader

# ask the *panel*

Questions about fitness, nutrition, motivation and cooking? You ask and our team of experts answer.

**Q** I always struggle with motivation over the holiday period. Can you suggest any helpful hints?

*Marilyn Barnes, Melbourne, Vic*

**Lorraine Isola replies**

**A** Christmas is a time of celebration. If you're trying to lose or maintain your weight, it can also be an extremely challenging time. As we attempt to navigate our way through seemingly endless social commitments and a general lack of routine, healthy habits can be overlooked. It may seem easier to put our healthy habits on ice while we party.

But how will you feel if you do? Chances are the answer is not so great when it comes time for your next weigh in. The key is not to deprive yourself and to join in the fun – but wisely and in moderation.

Get the most out of Christmas season with these simple strategies:

- Plan your social calendar and organise your menus around any outings.
- Schedule regular exercise sessions into your diary so you don't miss them.
- Encourage a family stroll after dinner every evening – it's a great chance to catch up.
- Make a solid commitment to stick to your daily **POINTS** allowance, no matter what you're tempted by. Ask yourself whether you'd prefer that piece of cake right now or reaching your goal weight sooner.

Remember that it isn't just your actions between Christmas and New Year's Days that determine your weight-loss success but, more importantly, those between New Year's and Christmas Days that'll make the real impact on your healthy lifestyle.

**Q** Which fruit and vegetables are best stored in the fridge and which will last longer stored at room temperature?

*Diane Gawne, Wyong, NSW*

**Lucy Kelly replies**

**A** Certain fruits and vegetables, such as pineapple, bananas and sweet potatoes, are cold sensitive and should not be stored in the fridge. To prevent bananas becoming overripe, place them in a sealed plastic bag in the fruit bowl and they'll last a few extra days. Stone fruit, avocados, rockmelons, papayas, pineapples, pears and mangoes need to be ripened at room temperature and only stored in the refrigerator for a very short time, if at all. Tomatoes are best stored at room temperature as they can lose their flavour quickly and become floury in the fridge. Try to buy fresh fruit and vegetables a few days ahead and top them up as you run out.

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ask the panel



**Q** Is it essential to include oils in my diet? I'm trying to lose weight and wonder whether they're really necessary.

Kylie Dawes, Cairns, Qld

Emma Stirling replies

**A** Healthy fats and oils are needed to help your body absorb vitamins and supply essential fatty acids, plus many contain potent antioxidants and bioactive compounds. Nutrition researchers now praise the health benefits of including a controlled amount of good fats in the diet. The research on olive oil alone includes studies on anti-inflammatory properties and diabetes risk reduction. However, the emphasis on controlled amounts must be heeded for a healthy weight.

The range of pouring and cooking oils is huge and includes gourmet goodies like walnut or those infused with lemon, chilli and other flavours, plus relative newcomers like rice bran and carotino oils, promising better nutrient profiles. There is no single super oil and the best approach is to keep a range of plant-based, vegetable, nut or seed oils in small quantities in your pantry. Choose those in tinted glass or opaque packaging as light causes oil to oxidise and eventually go rancid. A range of oils will boost the nutrient variety of your diet and allow you to match the best flavour or cooking properties with your dish. There is now wide support and a code of practice for Australian extra virgin olive oil after concerns about impurities, lack of quality and freshness in imports. Read more about the qualities of olive oil and which brands to buy at [www.australianextravirgin.com.au](http://www.australianextravirgin.com.au)

The real key is to realise that all oils are basically 100 per cent fat content and supply high amounts of kilojoules or **POINTS** values. Don't be fooled that light oils are lower in **POINTS** values: they're simply lighter in flavour or colour.

Along with foods containing good fats, like oily fish with omega-3s, the *Weight Watchers Good Health Guidelines* recommend you aim for two teaspoons of healthy pouring oils a day. The top five on the list are chosen based on their fat profile, vitamin E content, affordability and availability, and are olive, safflower, canola, linseed/flaxseed and sunflower oil. These oils can be enjoyed in salads or used in cooking, but still need to be counted as part of your daily **POINTS** allowance.

**Q** I am well into my 70s and don't know what exercise I should and shouldn't do. I walk and play tennis now but am not sure what the appropriate amount of exercise is for my age.

Magaret Nolan, Maraylya, NSW

Martha Lourey-Bird replies

**A** No matter what your age or stage of life, it's really important to be active. So, continue walking and playing the tennis you enjoy, but also consider trying some new activities in case tennis no longer becomes an option for you. These might include tai chi, line or ballroom dancing or bowls.

The Australian Government has five activity guidelines for older Australians:

- 1 Do some form of physical activity, no matter what your age, weight, health problems or abilities.
- 2 Be active every day in as many ways as possible, doing a range of physical activities incorporating fitness, strength, balance and flexibility.
- 3 Accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most days.
- 4 If you've stopped physical activity or are starting a new one, start at a level that is easily manageable and gradually build up to the recommended amount, type and frequency.
- 5 If you've enjoyed a lifetime of vigorous physical activity, carry on doing so in a manner suited to your capability, provided safety procedures and guidelines are adhered to.

Regular physical activity has benefits for you as you get older, such as helping to decrease the chance of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. Physically, exercise benefits bones, muscles and joints but psychologically it brings improved quality of life, socialisation and less chance of depression. So, whatever you're doing, keep it up!



If your letter to Martha is published, you'll win a pair of women's sports shoes from Rykå. Don't forget to tell us your shoe size when you write in to *Ask the Panel*, Locked Bag 2020, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia or email [editor@weightwatchers.com.au](mailto:editor@weightwatchers.com.au)