

ask the

EXPERTS

This month, our team decodes the healthiest takeaway options, easy aqua workouts and home cooking.

nutrition

What's the best choice when ordering takeaway?

Rachel Westcott, via email



Emma Stirling
Nutrition editor

Takeaways can be a saviour when you're too tired to cook or the cupboards are bare, but it pays to make smart choices for weight-loss success and limit the frequency to once a week. Top choices include Italian and thin wood-fired pizza with vegetable toppings, such as fresh broccoli, capsicum and tomato, and shaved parmesan. Or a small-sized, tomato-based or marinara seafood pasta with penne or spaghetti. Make sure you add a garden or rocket salad (no dressing) to the order. You can also stay on track with Asian cuisine. With Thai, skip the creamy coconut milk curries and

laksas and stick to aromatic stir-fries that are heavy on vegetables, coriander and chilli. Add a 1-cup portion-controlled serve of rice. If you're going Japanese, try mixed sushi, seaweed salad and miso soup or teriyaki beef and rice with vegetables. If you choose to go the fast option, accurately check the kilojoule and **ProPoints** values online before doing the drive-through. You can go the 'whole meal' deal if you're on track for the week but, chances are, you'll want to make a few smart switches. Look for lighter menu options like wraps, salads and seared skinless chicken. Instead of fries and chips, opt for a garden salad or corn on the cob. Stick to water or a diet soft drink and skip the dessert.

What's the difference between healthy weight, overweight and obese?

Mary McKenzie, Brisbane, QLD

HEALTH



Allan Bolton
Men's consultant

Good question. As body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference increase, so too does health risk. Having a healthy weight is not about having the perfect body – most of us have some physical feature we'd like to change. It refers to optimal body weight for staying energetic and healthy based on height, gender and age. Two key measurements for determining healthy weight are BMI and waist circumference. BMI

is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by height in metres squared. It is used to assess underweight (less than 18.5), normal/healthy weight (18.5–24.99), overweight (25–29.99) and three classes of obesity (moderate: 30–34.99, severe: 35–39.99 and very severe: greater than 40).

BMI has limitations at the individual level in that it doesn't distinguish body fat from lean mass (that is, everything else), nor does it reflect body-fat distribution. Combining BMI with waist circumference

therefore strengthens assessment for health risks. Having fat around your abdominal organs and an enlarged waist circumference means you're more likely to develop certain obesity-related health conditions, especially if you have a high BMI. Waist measurements greater than 94cm for men or 80cm for women

indicate a greater risk of developing chronic obesity-related diseases.



cooking

I love Italian-style pasta. Could you provide some low-fat tips for cooking it?

Amanda Gardner, via email

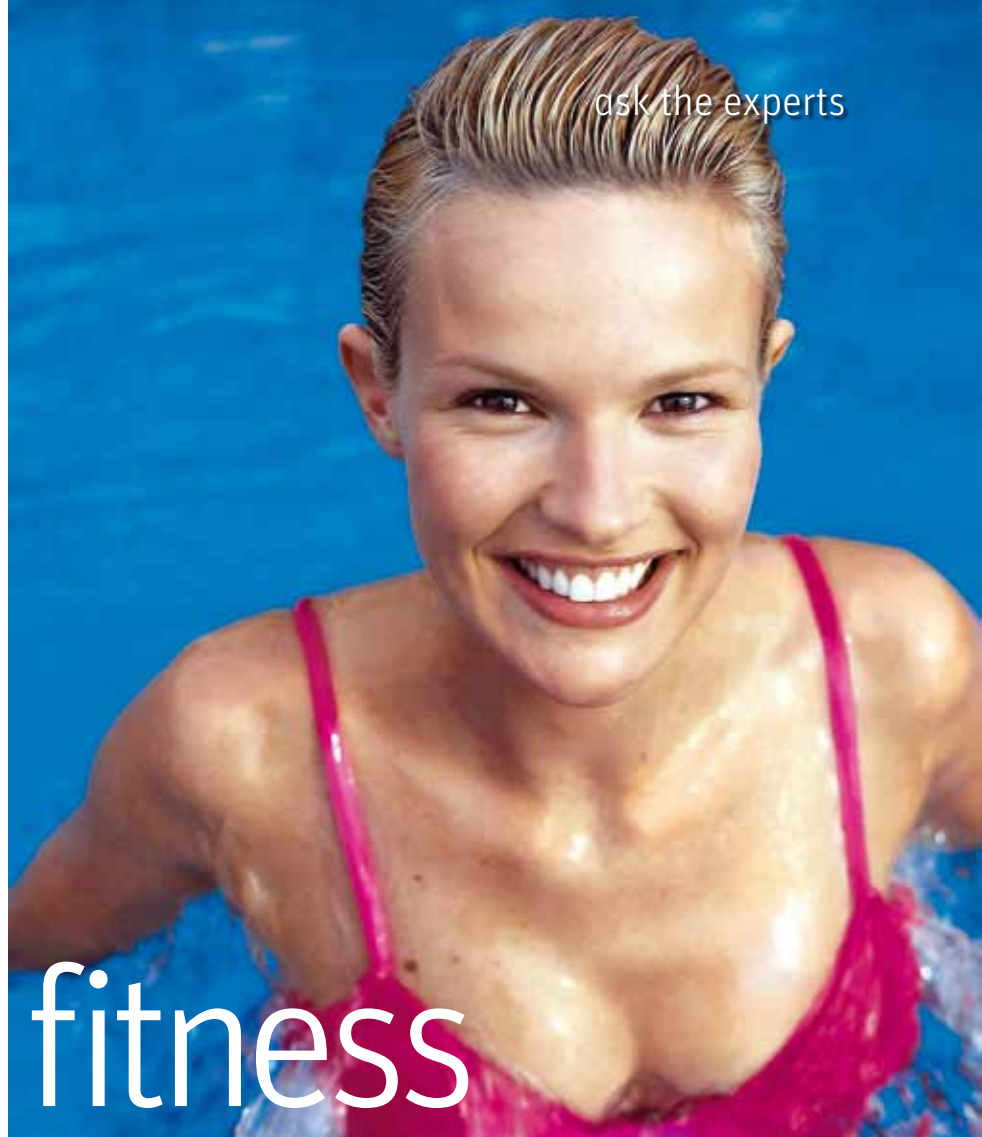


Lucy Kelly
Senior food
editor

The best way to cook pasta is in a large pot of boiling salted water until tender or al dente (from the Italian and meaning firm to the bite).

Salt adds flavour and makes the water boil at a slightly higher temperature. When the water has come to the boil, add pasta in one go and stir until the water returns to the boil. This will stop the pasta from sticking together. Continue to boil rapidly for 2 to 3 minutes if pasta is fresh and for 5 to 12 minutes if pasta is dried, depending on the shape. Follow the instructions on the pasta package for cooking times. Drain pasta through a colander over the sink, then return it to the pot it was cooked in. Add a tomato-based sauce or a low-fat pesto made with chicken broth instead of oil and toss together well. Divide among plates and serve with grated parmesan cheese.

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fitness

I've been attending the same aqua aerobics classes – which are great – for the past six months, but I'm now keen to know if there are any other water-based exercises I can do to help me lose weight.

Linda Jordan, Kalgoorlie, WA



Martha
Lourey-Bird
Fitness editor

Being active in the water is a great way to exercise, no matter what your age or fitness level. You can choose from a range of aqua aerobics classes, including Aqua-Boxing and Aqua-Step, plus various water equipment (aqua weights, running belts, flippers and noodles) so you get a great workout with lots of variety, whether you're in a class or doing laps. Water supports your body, so if you're suffering from an injury or have lots of weight to lose, it's a great low-impact exercise option. There are also benefits to your heart, lungs, muscles, body shape and tone. However, it is non-weight bearing, which means it doesn't help to strengthen your bones. So, if you're at risk of or suffer from osteoporosis, always include weight-bearing exercise (walking, tennis or weights) in your training plans as well, rather than relying solely on water-based exercises.

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