

ask the *experts*

The one-stop shop for fitness, nutrition, motivation and cooking questions. You ask, our team of experts answer. It's that simple.



Nutrition
Emma Stirling
Nutrition editor



Fitness
Martha Lourey-Bird
Fitness editor



Cooking
Lucy Kelly
Senior food editor



Motivation
Bronwyn Robertson
2009 Slimmer of the Year

Q My attempts to barbecue meat like beef and lamb never seem to go well. It's either raw or so over-done it dries out. Is there a trick to getting it right every time?
Janice Chong, Auckland, NZ

Lucy Kelly replies

A Yes, there are a few techniques that should help. First, let the barbecue heat up properly so that, when the meat hits, it will seal nicely. Try and resist the temptation to turn the meat until it's browned on the first side. Once browned, turn and allow to cook on the other side. Don't keep poking with the barbecue fork or tongs, otherwise the meat will lose its juices. Also, avoid turning constantly – once is enough. It's fine to peek and see how brown it is underneath.

To test when the meat is cooked, poke it with barbecue tongs (you're allowed to this time). If there is little resistance, the meat is still very rare. This feels like poking your thumb muscle when the tips of your thumb and forefinger are touching. If the meat is browning too much, move it to a cooler part of the barbecue to finish cooking or return to the marinade and pop it into a moderate oven for five minutes.

If there's moderate resistance, then the meat is medium to medium rare. This feels the same as when you poke your thumb muscle when the tips of your thumb and middle finger are touching. If there's a fair bit of resistance, then the meat is well done, like poking your thumb muscle when the tips of your thumb and ring finger are touching.

Be sure to rest your meat, covered for five minutes, before eating to allow the juices to settle. This way, you'll get the most tender result.



Q I've heard that constantly losing and then regaining weight plays havoc with your metabolism. Is this true?
Lyn Bradney, Indooroopilly, Qld

Emma Stirling replies

A Commonly referred to as yo-yo dieting, weight cycling is the term given to repeated losses and regains of bodyweight. There's a great deal of confusion surrounding the effect on metabolism, weight and overall health.

A review of the science on weight cycling concluded it is neither linked to an increase in body fat, an increase in fat around the belly nor a decrease in metabolism.

So, why does it feel harder to lose weight each cycle? There have been some studies linking weight cycling to increased psychological distress and life dissatisfaction. There's also evidence it reduces levels of a person's perceived ability or confidence to make a change.

Frequently losing and gaining weight is not the recommended way to maintain a healthy weight or achieve a healthy lifestyle. However, the health benefits of weight-loss attempts greatly outweigh the potential drawbacks of weight cycling. Make sure you correct friends and family members who use yo-yo dieting myths as a reason to avoid starting a weight-loss program. Encourage them give it a try instead.

Send a cooking question to Lucy and you could win this incredible Ingenio Cocoon Stainless Steel compact cooking set valued at \$349.95. For more info, visit www.tefal.com.au



Write to Lucy at *Ask the Experts*, Locked Bag 2020, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia or email editor@weightwatchers.com.au



Q I'm losing weight but still finding it hard to flatten my tummy. Are there any exercises that can help me look more toned in the abdominal region?
Fiona Shaw, Terrigal, NSW

Martha Lourey-Bird replies:

A Unfortunately, for many women, it often seems your trouble spot may be the first place you put weight on but the last place you take it off!

As far as the abdominal region goes, while you can't spot reduce, you can certainly improve the appearance of your stomach through non-moving resistance exercise.

Cardio exercise will help your overall weight loss, traditional resistance exercises such as sit-ups and crunches may add strength to the abdominal muscles underneath the body fat but won't change the actual appearance of your tummy, so the most effective exercises for toning are static exercises such as the plank. Perform it either on your knees (easier) or toes. Keep your forearms in contact with the floor, your back flat and lift your navel up towards your spine, then hold this position for as long as you comfortably can.

You can also do an 'all-day tummy tuck' in a seated position. Sit on a chair with relaxed tummy muscles, then breathe out and pull your navel in towards your spine. Aim to maintain this correct posture for five full breaths and work up to one minute or more. Do it anywhere at any time to help tone your tummy and improve posture instantly.



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 Experts*, Locked Bag 2020, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia or email editor@weightwatchers.com.au

Q Losing weight for good takes time and I often find it hard to stay motivated. What's the easiest way to overcome obstacles and avoid getting disheartened?
Emma Stewart, Gymea, NSW

Bronwyn Robertson replies

A Every weight-loss journey has highs and lows, and it was no different for me. I'd have weeks where I had put in a huge effort only to be rewarded with a small gain on the scales. The important thing is to focus on the bigger picture – all that effort will have an effect. It may not happen this week but it's cumulative and over time the results will become evident. So, don't give up after an unexpected week on the scales!

Attending weekly Weight Watchers meetings is a fantastic way to stay positive. It's a time to share your story, wins and also frustrations. You'll find that any problem you're having has been experienced by at least one other person who can share their solution. I always came away from meetings feeling positive and energised for the week ahead.

