

ask the EXPERTS

This month, the best way to cook eggplant, exercising at home and the health benefits of chocolate.

cooking

I've never cooked eggplant before. Can you suggest some tasty ways to incorporate it into my diet?

Arleen, via email



Lucy Kelly
Senior food
editor

Eggplant is one of my favourite vegetables because it's so versatile. To start, cut your eggplant into 1cm slices, spray both sides with oil, then chargrill, grill or pan-fry in a non-stick frying pan until golden and just cooked through. Use these slices to make a parmigiana (eggplant slices with cheese and sauce) or an antipasto platter. You can also add eggplant slices to salads, pasta or tomato-based casseroles and soups. It's delicious in a tomato relish made with diced canned tomatoes, garlic, onion, ground cumin, ground chilli, brown sugar and malt vinegar, and served with barbecued meats or fish. To make a baba ganoush dip, roast eggplant whole (after piercing in several places to stop it bursting) until charred on the outside and tender in the centre. Scoop out the flesh and mix with garlic, tahini, lemon juice and olive oil.

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fitness

What kinds of exercises can I do indoors to help shed the kilos?

Anna Andrews, Bellevue Heights, SA



Martha
Lourey-Bird
Fitness editor

You can easily create a gym at home using household items. To tone butt and thighs, perform walking lunges. Fill two buckets with water and, holding one in each hand, take a big step forward. As you lunge, your front knee should be above your ankle and your back knee above the floor. Push up through your front heel and take another big step forward so you're crossing the floor in an exaggerated walk. For tricep dips, use a chair, bench or coffee table to support your weight. Facing away from the object, place both hands behind you. Bend your knees and arms as you lower your bottom to just above the floor. Straighten elbows in between each 'dip' to return to the starting position. You can also try performing squats, crunches, push-ups and bicep curls, or skip/run on the spot.

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nutrition

What's the difference between carob and chocolate? Is one healthier than the other?

Miranda Smithson, via email



Emma Stirling
Nutrition editor

Carob is made from the seed pods of a carob tree, whereas chocolate is made from the cocoa bean. Although carob has been promoted as a caffeine-free alternative, choc connoisseurs often avoid carob because they consider the taste inferior. In the health stakes, far more research has been focused on

chocolate's beneficial antioxidants. Also, its saturated fat content does not raise blood cholesterol levels the way animal fats do. Chocolate contains the feel-good chemical theobromine, which carob doesn't have. Enjoy Easter, and keep on track with your weight-loss Goal, with portion-controlled goodies like mini eggs. Still craving a choc fix? Buy dark chocolate rather than milk. Due to its strong taste, you're more likely to nibble slowly, savour it and be satisfied by a small serve.

FACT 25% of Australian high school students are now overweight or obese.

health

How much water should I be drinking a day? Should I drink more water when exercising?

Peter Sheldon, via email



Allan Bolton
Men's consultant

All levels of dehydration will reduce your exercise performance and, depending on the magnitude of dehydration, can pose a serious risk to your health. Although there is a common perception that everyone should be drinking eight 250ml glasses of water per day, it's impossible to specify a quantity that's right for everybody. When you are doing a workout, try to minimise dehydration by drinking enough fluid to match your sweat loss during the exercise session. Sweat loss can be determined by weighing yourself before and after your exercise workout. Each kilogram of weight loss indicates one litre of fluid loss.

Got a question? Email us at editor@weightwatchers.com.au or write to us at *Ask the Experts, Locked Bag 2020, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia.*



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