

YOUR WEIGHT-LOSS Q&A

Does coffee burn kilojoules? Is there an optimum time for exercise? Stop wondering and start slimming down with these expert answers.

Ever flipped through a magazine and read about a celebrity's 'miracle' weight loss, thanks to a detox diet or cutting out protein, and wondered if you could do the same? No matter where you are in your weight-loss journey, it's easy to be plagued with doubts about whether you're slimming down the right way, or if there's an easier solution. Well, worry no more. Here's what works – and what doesn't – with answers to 10 of your most common questions.

Will detoxing help me shed the kilos faster?

While it may seem as if a detox is a sure-fire solution to your weight woes, the negatives far outweigh the positives. "Detoxing is a highly overrated, mythical solution," says Aloysa Hourigan, senior nutritionist at Nutrition Australia Queensland. "When you do a detox, you might lose weight rapidly, but that's because

you're losing a lot of fluid. You might also drop some muscle because you're not eating properly. A detox diet can actually be very dangerous if it goes on for too long." As well as causing potentially lasting damage, contrary to popular belief, detoxing doesn't have any effect on your metabolism: "Any weight you lose will rebound as soon as you start eating again because it's not fat you're losing," cautions Hourigan.

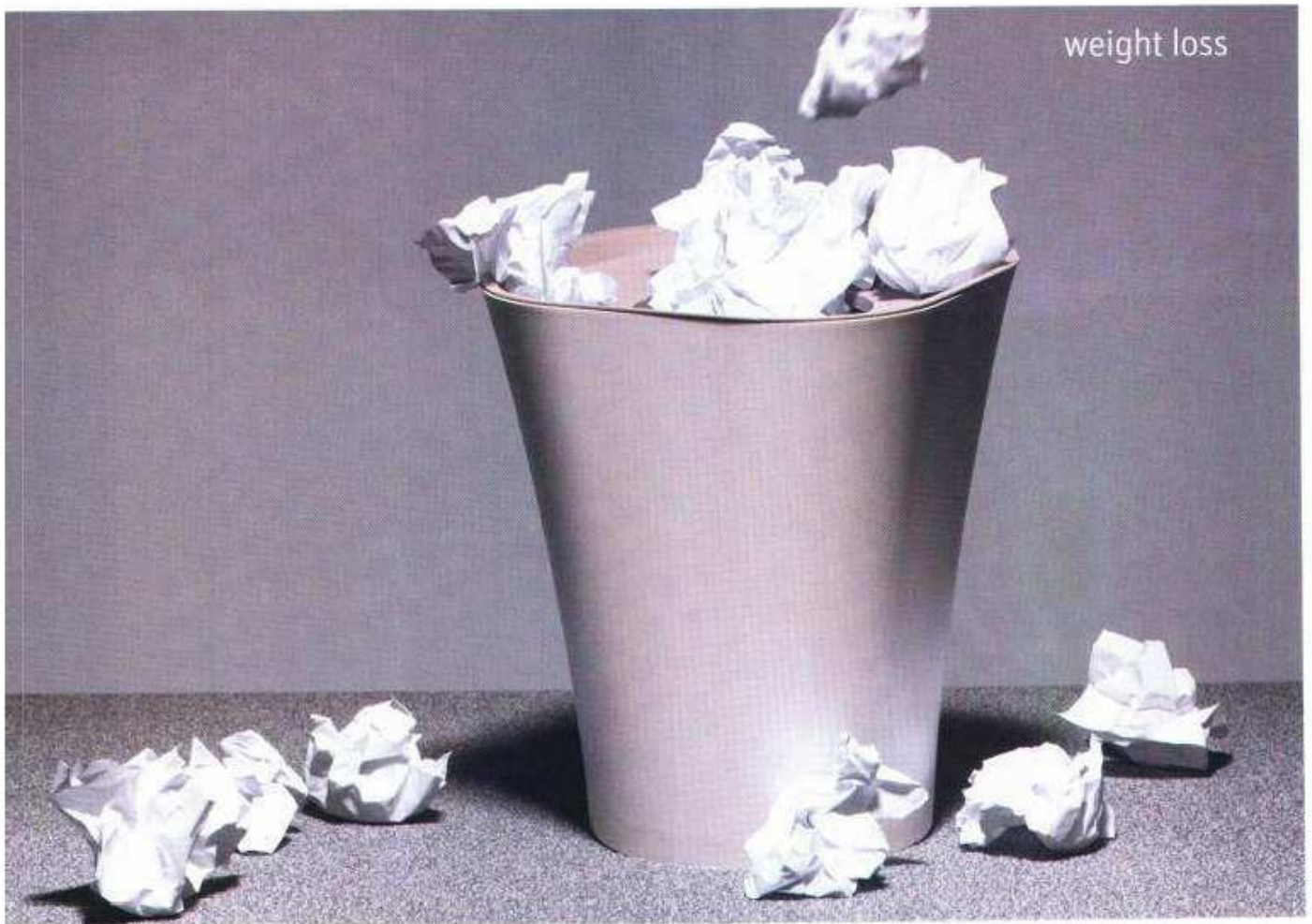
Does the time of day I exercise make any difference at all to my level of weight loss?

"Research suggests that exercising at particular times of the day can be advantageous to doing particular kinds of exercise," explains exercise scientist Paul Bulatao from Fitness Institute Australia. "It's thought that in the morning you may have a bit more cardiovascular capacity for training aerobically, while in

the afternoon (about 3–4pm), your body tends to be much stronger for resistance training." But is there a time of the day that's best for weight loss? According to Bulatao, the answer is no. "It is really up to the individual as to when they are most energised to exercise efficiently," he says. If you find a time that fits well into your schedule – when you're not distracted by work, kids or worrying about cooking your next meal – then you're more likely to work out for longer, which in turn helps with your overall weight loss.

Do you really burn more kilojoules eating celery than what's inside it?

According to accredited practising dietitian Clare Evangelista, this is one of those nutrition urban legends that won't go away. "All vegetables are good to eat because they're low in kilojoules, but it's a bit of a myth that you'll go into 'negative' territory



weight loss

if you eat celery or lettuce," she says. "However, having lots of vegetables on your plate will help to fill you up so that you avoid high-kilojoule foods or large portions of other parts of your meal." Aim to have five serves of fresh vegies each day, by including them in each of your main meals and snacks.

What's the most reliable way to help calculate a healthy body weight?

In addition to hitting your Weight Watchers Goal, two popular ways of calculating whether you fall within the healthy weight category include:

Body Mass Index: "Your Body Mass

Index (BMI) gives you a ballpark figure by considering both your height and weight," says Evangelista. "However, a major shortcoming of BMI is that it doesn't account for body shape or composition. If you put a professional football player on the scales, often their BMI will come up as obese."

Body composition scales: A better way to gauge how much you need to lose is to look at your overall body fat percentage. How? Invest in a set of good-quality body composition scales. By calculating your body fat ratio, muscle mass and the percentage of water in your body, body composition scales tend to give a far more accurate reading of your weight than BMI does.

Will exercising on an empty stomach help me slim down quicker?

"When you exercise on an empty stomach, your body is deprived of nutrients and fuel," explains Bulatao. "Your energy levels and performance decrease due to the lack of food, which hinders your ability to exercise at maximum effort. You train better when your body is fuelled, therefore burning a higher number of kilojoules, leading to successful weight loss." To help your body burn better – and tide you over until your next meal – grab some fresh fruit or a cracker and small piece of cheese to help fuel your body throughout your workout session.

LOVE IT AND LOSE IT

A year-long study by researchers from the Technical University of Lisbon and Bangor University found that improving body image can enhance the effectiveness of weight-loss programs based on diet and exercise.

Does coffee really help you burn kilojoules?

The short answer? No. "Caffeine has been shown to rev up your metabolism by a very small amount, but only for very short period," says

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Evangelista, who would also never encourage people to consume large amounts of caffeine because it has other negative effects on the body, such as speeding up your heart rate.

Does it cost more to eat healthy food than to eat junk?

In a word, no. Have you ever weighed up the cost between cooking a healthy meal and ordering a takeaway? You can create a mincemeat casserole with a side of frozen vegetables for a family of four for far less than it costs to order a pizza for two. "Look at the cost of a kilo of potatoes versus a kilo of potato chips. Compare the cost per unit – a bag of apples is a week's worth of snacks but a packet of biscuits might only last one afternoon," explains Evangelista.

Do I have to exercise or can I lose weight through diet alone?

"It's vital to increase activity when you're dieting," explains Hourigan. "Exercise helps to protect muscle mass and metabolic rate. You don't want to lose muscle as well as fat. You also need to remember how much exercise you need to do to burn kilojoules," adds Hourigan. "An hour's brisk walk will burn 300 kilojoules. You need about a 500 kilojoule deficit a day, every day, to lose half a kilo – so you need to burn 500 kilojoules more than you take in. So that's 90 minutes of brisk walking every day on top of everything else you normally do." You can, however, strike a balance between eating and exercise by sticking to your daily **ProPoints** allowance, along with 30 minutes of exercise each day.

Is there any way to try and take all the emotion out of eating?

There are a number of simple and practical ways to help separate food from your feelings. You can start by really listening to your body. Stop and think about why you're eating – is it because you're actually hungry? Or is it because you're feeling upset or overwhelmed, or are experiencing one of the many other feelings that trigger emotional eating? Once you've identified the situations that are likely to cause you to turn to food for comfort, Evangelista suggests doing something positive instead by adopting one or more of the following strategies:

- 1 Take a quick 30 minute nap to refresh your body and mind.
- 2 Exercise to lift your mood and distract your thoughts from food.
- 3 Head out and soak up 20 minutes of sunshine in the morning to help boost your vitamin D levels.
- 4 Busy yourself by doing household chores like cleaning or grocery shopping. You'll instantly feel more organised and in control of your life.

Will walking burn enough kilojoules to help me lose weight?

"Walking is, without doubt, the best form of exercise when you're starting out," says Bulatao. "Around the four to six-week mark, the body adapts and gets used to the activity, which means it doesn't burn as many kilojoules as it did when you first started exercising. To get around this, try increasing the intensity every four to six weeks, either through the pace of the walk, changing your route and adding in hills or steep descents." Eventually, change the type of exercise you do or include another one to your routine – think swimming, cycling, boxing or an aerobics class. **133**