

get
fit

eat
well

enjoy
life!

with uncle chris

SUGAR AND SALT

How much is too much?

Hello folks

We're all adults (apart from our offspring) so it's time to reveal a few home truths about our dietary habits.

Many of us -- perhaps that includes you or family or friends -- will sweeten their cup of tea or coffee with two teaspoons of sugar.

Or scatter salt on a meal before tasting it.

Now it's good to maximise the taste of that drink or meal, but it's worth considering weaning yourself off those indulgences.

I have to report that, according to the Australian Health Survey 2011-12, Tasmanians are:

- more overweight when compared with the national average
- we have higher blood pressure (30% compared with 21% nationally)

Those of us hard at work in the kitchen know, or we should know, when how much of a good thing is too much.

Especially sugar and salt.

Sugar is found naturally in health-giving produce -- milk, vegetables, fruit and nuts. That's called natural sugar.

But refined sugar (from sugar canes) is called added sugar. It's added to processed foods and drinks -- cakes, pies, biscuits, confectionary, many cereals and soft drinks.

Too much added sugar in food or drink will make them high in calories, or 'energy dense' and 'nutrient poor'. For instance, a 375ml can of soft drink could contain around 9 teaspoons of sugar.

According to the Dieticians Association of Australia, too much added sugar can cause weight gain and being overweight increases a person's risk of type 2 diabetes and other diseases.

I've just checked the pantry of a family

I'm close to. The parents are giving their kids yoghurt-topped muesli bars that weigh just 30g, but contain 10g of sugar. Wow! Two teaspoons of sugar in a muesli bar that's half the weight of an egg.

Back to those two teaspoons of sugar in a cup of your favourite brew: that's 32 calories, assuming the teaspoons are level.

The American Heart Association says the recommended maximum intake of added sugars per day is 100 calories (6 teaspoons) for women and 150 calories (9 teaspoons) for men.

So hold back on the sugar going into that cup.

Now the other flavour additive is salt - and that can be just as big a health issue as sugar.

Australia's Heart Foundation says salt is essential for life, but we Aussies are consuming far too much.

The terms 'salt' and 'sodium' are often used interchangeably but they refer to different things, the foundation says. Salt is made up of sodium and chloride and it's the sodium in salt that can be bad for your health.

Reducing salt in your diet can lower your blood pressure. And it can reduce the risk

of heart disease, kidney problems, fluid retention and strokes.

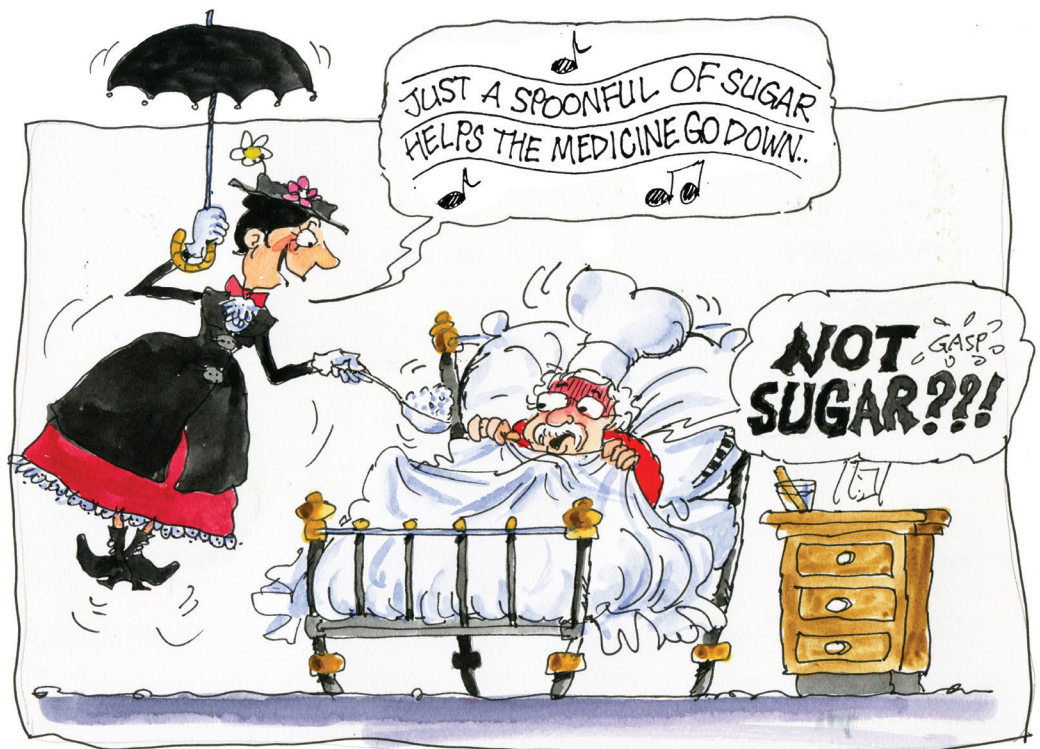
Australia's Heart Foundation recommends that adults eat less than 5g of salt (2000mg of sodium) a day. That's less than a teaspoon a day.

If you do eat packaged foods try 'no salt', 'low salt' or 'reduced salt' varieties, the Foundation says. Avoid products with more than 400mg of sodium per 100g. The best options are products with less than 120mg of sodium per 100g.

It suggests flavouring your meals with herbs and spices instead of salt. And folks, there are so many great herbs and spices in those little jars on supermarket shelves. My new-found favourite is Moroccan spices.

The Heart Foundation says nearly two-thirds of us Aussies are not physically active enough or maintain a healthy weight. As well as watching our food intake, it suggests just 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day to reduce our risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and kidney problems.

And with 16km of walking tracks in Brighton municipality, where better to stretch our limbs.



SAUCES FOR COURSES

HOW TO DRESS UP YOUR MEAL

Yes, folks there are indeed sauces for courses -- usually for main courses, but also for some desserts. And there's one -- apple sauce -- that's a winner with pork dishes and also with icecream!

Sauces add the finishing touch to your main meal of the day. Even a humble meat pie. What would that be without a splash of tomato sauce?

In my fridge there's a ready supply of commercial sauces to marinade meat dishes, to apply direct to a dish or to blend with other accompaniments.

My favourites in the fridge are a good quality worcestershire sauce, hoi sin and sweet chili sauce. While I don't like to recommend a brand name, I'm rather partial to an African inspired sauce from Beerenberg in South Australia called Taka Tala -- especially good for marinading meats. If your supermarket doesn't stock it, get them to order it in!

You can concoct your own sauces and marinades -- a simple one, especially good for chicken, is a blend of honey (Tasmanian, of course) and mustard.

Added to sliced chicken fillet as it's gently frying in a little oil -- or better still, used as a marinade in a fridge for several hours before cooking -- this makes a deliciously simple meal.

Sauces, apart from enhancing a meal, also help prevent meat from drying out.

Vinaigrettes are also sauces -- for salads! A good olive oil (Australian of course), lemon and herbs are the basis for this. Vinegars can also be added to vinaigrettes or replace citrus juice.

I've included bolognese in the recipes because it is a sauce in its own right -- and can be a key ingredient for spaghetti, but also for lasagne. Also it's great just spread on toast.

My favourite sauce here is salse verde -- it's a bright green pungent sauce that goes to so well with a nice slab of barbecued beef.

WHAT GOES WITH WHAT

SAVOURY

Béarnaise is an emulsion sauce of eggs, vinegar, butter and herbs. It is great served with fish, vegetables, white and pink meats.

Bechamel is a white sauce used in many dishes such as lasagne. It is the base when making a mornay sauce and is made from a roux and milk.

Bolognese is a traditional Italian meat and tomato-based sauce which can be served with pasta such as spaghetti or used to construct a dish such as lasagne. With carrots and celery incorporated, it's a great way to get the kids to eat their vegies.

Cocktail sauce - Prawns are mostly served with this sauce -- hence prawn cocktail, but it can be used with other shellfish.

Cranberry sauce is a sweet fruit sauce to accompany gravy with roast turkey or chicken.

Gravy (yes, you know this, but it's worth describing) is a sauce made from the flavours on the base of a roasting pan and the stock of your choice, thickened with flour. This can be used with any meat dishes.

Hollandaise is an emulsion sauce of eggs, vinegar (I like tarragon) and butter that can be served with fish, meat and vegetables. You can add other flavours to enhance this sauce for what you are serving it with. Dill could be added for seafood, tabasco to spice up for fish or meat. This is also a breakfast sauce served with eggs with bacon or ham (Benedict) and eggs and spinach (Florentine).

Mint sauce is traditionally served with roast lamb and peas.

Mornay sauce is made of bechamel and cheese. It can be used with cauliflower.

Mushroom sauce is a great

accompaniment to beef, veal and chicken. It can be blended from stock, wine and butter or cream based and also used with pasta.

Pepper sauce can accompany meat, poultry and fish dishes. It is a reduction sauce that can be made with cream, stock, wine and butter.

Salsa verde is a rich dark green herb sauce that can be served with both meat and fish dishes. Ideal in summer months when fresh basil and parsley are plentiful. It is best served with a barbecued piece of beef scotch fillet.

Tartare sauce is great for fish and seafood. It's made from aioli with capers and gherkins.

SWEET

Caramel sauce is a brown sugar, butter and cream sauce which can be served with ice cream or puddings, especially sticky date pudding.

Chocolate sauce is a chocolate and cream sauce that can be used to top ice cream for Sundays, with puddings or as garnish to cakes.

Crème anglaise is a traditional custard used to accompany cakes and puddings.

Curds - traditionally made with citrus but also can be made with other fruit flavours. It can be used to fill tarts as it sets or layers in cakes or just as an accompaniment.

Fruit coulis - used to accompany desserts, cakes and top ice cream. They can be made with an array of fruits, most common being berries and mango.

ALL-ROUNDER

Apple sauce is traditionally served with roast pork and gravy. It can also be served warm as a dessert with icecream.



SAVOURY SAUCE RECIPES

Bolognese sauce

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 cloves garlic
2 onions, finally diced
2 carrots, finally diced
2 celery stalks, finally diced
1 kilo minced beef
680g passata (tomato puree)
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 tablespoon Italian mixed herbs
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 cup red wine
sea salt and pepper to taste

Heat a deep large saucepan over high heat. Add the oil, garlic, herbs, paprika, onion, celery and carrot and cook for 3 minutes or until just soft. Add the mince and cook, stirring until brown with no lumps.

Add the tomato paste and cook for 2 minutes, then add the wine, cook and reduce the wine, then add passata (tomato puree) and slowly simmer until oil starts to release from the sauce. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Salsa verde

1 bunch of fresh basil
½ bunch of mint (optional - some cooks don't add mint, especially if it accompanies beef)
½ bunch Italian parsley
2 cloves of garlic, peeled
1 small handful of capers
1 small handful of cornichons (small pickled gherkins)
4 quality anchovy fillets
1 tablespoon dijon mustard
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
8 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Peel the garlic and pick the herb leaves, then place into a blender. Add capers, cornichons and anchovies, then blend.

Add mustard and vinegar, then continue blending and slowly stir in the oil until you achieve a puree consistency.

Season as needed with black pepper and sea salt.

Hollandaise sauce

4 peppercorns
1 bay leaf
30ml white wine vinegar
45ml water
500g butter
5 egg yolks
salt and pepper
lemon juice

First, make 50ml of reduction:
place peppercorns, bay leaf, vinegar and water in a small pot. Reduce by almost half, then strain and reserve 50ml.

Clarify butter (also known as ghee):
melt the butter in a pot over a low heat. When it is completely melted, skim any scum from the surface. Then carefully pour off the butter, leaving behind the milky sediment.

In a bowl, metal if possible, whisk yolks and reduction over a water bath until the mix is light and like thin cream. Remove from the water bath and continue whisking slowly, adding the melted butter in a slow steady stream until the

Continued over

sauce has thickened. Be careful not to add the butter too quickly or it will split. You may not need all the butter, it depends on how thick the sauce gets; you may need to gauge this as you go. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper and a little lemon juice if needed.

Tartare sauce

1 cup whole egg aioli
3 tablespoons capers, drained and chopped
3 tablespoons gherkins, drained and chopped
2 spring onions, finely chopped
squeeze of lemon juice
3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
flaked sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and season to taste.

Béarnaise sauce

160ml white wine
60ml white wine vinegar
2 shallots, finely chopped
1 teaspoon dried tarragon
1 teaspoon black peppercorns
3 egg yolks
1 tablespoon lemon juice
250g butter, chilled, chopped
1 tablespoon chopped fresh tarragon
salt and white pepper

First, you need to make a reduction by combining wine, vinegar, shallots, tarragon and peppercorns in a small saucepan. Simmer for 5 minutes or until liquid reduces to 2 tablespoons. Strain through a fine sieve into a heatproof bowl. Discard the shallot mixture.

Place the bowl containing the wine mixture over a saucepan of simmering water, making sure the bowl doesn't touch the water. Add egg yolks and lemon juice. Whisk for 2 minutes or until pale and frothy. Add butter, a few pieces at a time, whisking constantly after each addition, until the sauce is thick and velvety. Remove from heat. Stir in tarragon. Season with salt and white pepper.

Serve the sauce immediately while still warm. This sauce does not hold for long periods.

Cocktail sauce

2 egg yolks
1 tablespoon dijon mustard
1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
300ml vegetable and olive oil blend
¼ cup tomato ketchup
2 teaspoons worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon tabasco sauce
salt and white pepper

In a large bowl, whisk together yolks, mustard and vinegar until thick and pale.

Slowly add oil in a thin, steady stream, whisking constantly, until thick.

Stir in ketchup, worcestershire and tabasco sauces. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Bechamel sauce

40g butter
40g plain flour
500ml milk
30g onion, wedged
2 cloves, whole
1 bay leaf
½ teaspoon nutmeg
Salt and white pepper

To make a roux in a saucepan, melt the butter slowly and then add the flour. Allow the mixture to cook over a moderate heat, stirring all the time. It must cook without colour until it resembles breadcrumbs, then continue cooking until it becomes smooth again. Allow to cool.

In another pot, bring the milk, onion, cloves and bay leaf to the boil. Turn off and allow to infuse for 5 minutes.

Set the pot with the roux on a moderate heat and strain in the milk, about 50ml at a time. Stir with a wooden spoon to make a silky-smooth sauce. When about half the milk has been added the rest can be incorporated in two parts.

Allow the sauce to simmer on low for about 20 minutes, stirring frequently to prevent burning.

Strain the sauce and cover to prevent a skin forming until you need.

Mornay sauce

500ml bechamel sauce
60g parmesan, grated
60g gruyere cheese, grated
25g butter
100ml cream

Add the cheese to the hot bechamel sauce and mix well.

Mix in the butter thoroughly away from the heat, then add the cream.

Mint sauce

2 large bunches fresh mint
250g caster sugar
175ml cider vinegar
50ml water
salt and pepper

Chop the fresh mint finely with a knife and set to one side.

Put sugar, vinegar and water on a medium heat until clear. Allow to cool. Fold in the mint and season with salt and white pepper.

Cranberry sauce

500g frozen cranberries
1 cup brown sugar, firmly packed
½ cup brown malt vinegar
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
4 whole cloves

In a saucepan add cranberries, sugar, vinegars and cloves. Stir over a medium heat until sugar dissolves. Bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally for an hour or until thickened.

Pour sauce into hot sterilised jars and seal immediately or use straight away once cool.

Pepper sauce

2 tablespoon brandy
80ml beef stock
55g can green or pink peppercorns, drained
125ml thickened cream

Pour the brandy into a pan, reduce a little. Add the stock, peppercorns and cream. Simmer, uncovered, for about 5 minutes or until thickened slightly. Season to taste.

Note for extra flavour in your sauce cook the meat that the sauce is accompanying in the pan before making the sauce.

Add the brandy to this pan, stir well to remove any nice brown bits from the pan then follow the same method. If there are any juices from the steak add these to the pan; stir until combined.

Mushroom sauce

1 tablespoon butter
2 tablespoons oil
1 red onion, sliced
500g portobello, flat mushrooms, button mushrooms, sliced
2 sprigs fresh thyme
2 garlic cloves crushed
1 cup (250ml) cream
1 cup beef stock mixed with 3 teaspoons corn flour
1-2 tablespoons lemon juice to taste
salt & pepper to taste
2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Heat the butter and olive oil together in a fry pan. Add the onion, garlic and thyme, sauté with no colour then add the sliced mushrooms to the pan, increase the heat slightly then season with salt and pepper.

Allow the mushrooms to fry until golden brown and fragrant.

Pour in the cream and stock and allow to simmer gently for 5-10 minutes until the sauce has thickened and cooked through.

Season with lemon, salt and pepper and add the parsley.

Rich gravy

2 teaspoons olive oil
2 carrots, chopped coarsely
4 shallots, peeled and quartered
2 stalks celery, trimmed, chopped coarsely
2 teaspoon plain flour
1 tablespoon tomato paste
500ml beef stock (or chicken stock if you are having roast chicken)
250ml water
salt and pepper

To make gravy, in a pan heat oil over medium-high heat. Add carrot, shallot and celery cook, uncovered, stirring occasionally for about 10 minutes or until vegetables are well-browned.

Add flour and cook, stirring for about 4 minutes or until mixture is brown. Add paste, stock and the water, bring to the boil. Boil uncovered for about 10 minutes or until gravy thickens. Season to taste.

Strain sauce, discard vegetables. Now the gravy is ready to serve.

Note, for best flavour use the roasting pan you have cooked your meat in. When you are frying off your vegetables get all the meat residue off the base of the pan and use any excess pan juices in it when you add the liquid.

SAUCY DESSERTS

Salted caramel

225g butter
150g brown sugar
150g caster sugar
150g Golden Syrup
1 cup cream
1 teaspoon sea salt

Place all ingredients in a saucepan, place on a low heat. Without stirring allow the caramel to melt and come together.

When mix has melted, whisk well until almost boiling and remove from heat.

Stir the caramel occasionally as it cools to ensure it won't split. This is great served with puddings or over icecream.

Chocolate sauce

300g good-quality dark chocolate, chopped
300ml pure (thin) cream

Place chocolate in a bowl. Place cream in a pan over medium heat and bring to just below boiling point. Pour over chocolate, then stir until smooth. Serve warm

Crème anglaise (vanilla custard)

300ml milk
30g caster sugar
3 egg yolks
1 teaspoon vanilla essence

Bring the milk and vanilla to the boil in a pot over a medium heat, whisk together the yolks and sugar in a bowl.

Slowly add the milk to the egg mixture and whisk well to combine. Return to a clean pan and stir continuously over a low heat until the sauce thickens and coats the back of the spoon, remove from the heat and continue to stir for 2 minutes, then strain and cool in a plastic container. Do not boil this custard as it will curdle.

Raspberry coulis

250g raspberries fresh or frozen
1 tablespoon icing sugar
½ lemon juice only, or to taste

Add all of the coulis ingredients into a pot and heat until the raspberries start to break down.

Transfer to a food processor and blend until smooth, then pass through a sieve.

Set aside until cool, serve with icecream or cake.

Other berries can be substituted in place of the raspberries.

Lemon curd

4 eggs
4 egg yolks
330g caster sugar
160g butter, diced
4 lemons, zested and juiced

Zest and juice the lemons, combine all the ingredients in a heavy based saucepan and over a low heat whisk until the curd thickens, but don't boil otherwise the eggs will curdle.

Once thickened, strain through a fine sieve and serve with cakes or as a spread.

THE ALL-ROUNDER

Apple sauce

500g granny smith apples, peeled, cored, diced
1/3 cup water
2 tablespoons caster sugar
1 tablespoon lemon juice
pinch mixed spice
10g butter

Combine apple, water, sugar, lemon juice, mixed spice and butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Simmer, covered, for 10 minutes or until apple is soft. Remove from heat. Set aside for 5 minutes to cool. Then in a food processor, process until smooth. Serve warm or cold as a sweet or savoury accompaniment.

Continued over

HYDRATION

Too little or too much...let your body be the judge!

Dear Brighton

I get to be quite candid and open in these articles, and that's one of the reasons I have loved being part of this publication for the last few years. Being honest; without a lot of feedback from people saying they have been motivated to get training, I find myself enjoying the process most when exploring and offering information that is useful to any reader, regardless of their exercise status.

With this in mind, today I would like to discuss hydration and some common questions surrounding how much water we should drink, when we should have it, and how it affects the body. There are many areas to dive into (sorry, couldn't help myself) so I'll break it down into some of the main points.

How do our bodies use water to function?

As you may have heard, our bodies are actually largely made up of water. In fact, around 60% of an adult's body is H₂O, which rises to up to 75% for babies (which I assume accounts for the tears... That will be the last bad joke).

Contrary to what you may assume, only 20% of the water in our bodies is in the blood, and most is actually inside the cells themselves. Different body parts are made of different cell types and therefore water is not spread evenly.

For example, while bones contain about 30% water, the brain and heart are made up of up to 73% and 83% water respectively. This is why you will notice dehydration in the form of a headache far earlier than you will feel the effect on your bones.

Water doesn't just assist in the blood, shifting nutrients around from organ to organ, but has many jobs, such as maintaining normal internal temperature and acting as a shock absorber for our bumps or falls. While we do absorb some water through the air contacting our skin, we tend to lose more through sweat etc than we take in, so it makes sense why people can survive much longer without food than they can without water.

How much water do we actually need to drink each day, and how much do we get from other areas?

People will often tell you that we all need to drink 8 glasses of water (or 2 litres) every day. This is like the 10,000 steps a day myth that gets shouted until the cows come home, but this particular value isn't actually based on facts. Further to this, it ignores the reality that we are getting large amounts of our daily water intake from food or other drinks.

There is no exact amount of water that you should drink each day and instead you should take an individual approach. Drink when you need it and try to base it on how much exercise you do in a day, or your body shape, or the glow of your urine (the

more yellow meaning the higher percentage of waste in the wee, and therefore the less water present in the body to do all the other jobs).

After reading this I ponder whether regularly drinking more water will lead to other positive changes to the body, and also is there a point where regularly drinking 'too much' water can actually make the body function worse?

Drinking too much water in a very short term can certainly be dangerous, and in extreme cases, the resulting decrease in the percentage of salt in the blood and cells etc from a massive excess of water has led to death.

'If you are down a kilo after exercise, drink close to 1.5 litres to have a perfect recovery'

But how about a routine that is less crazy, over a long period? This was actually pretty interesting. In what I read, it seems that regular excess of water, above requirement, causes the cells to swell, which can lead to many of the same symptoms as dehydration.

Rather than aiming for clear urine as the goal therefore, the aim should instead be for straw coloured to transparent yellow. While this aim isn't to stop people from carrying around a water bottle, it is instead to promote people listening to their body in terms of thirst.

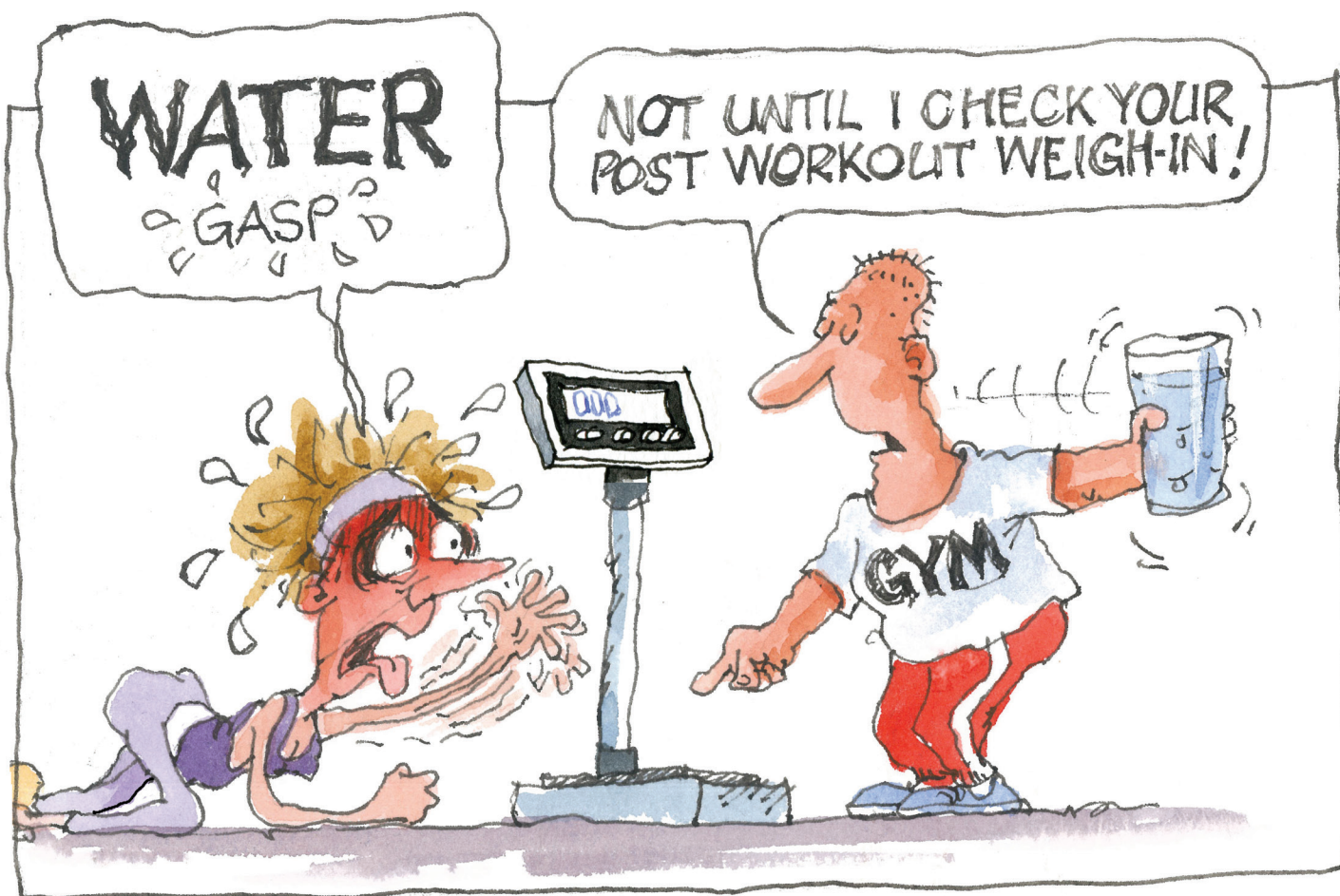
If you are thirsty, hydrate. If you get a headache or feel fatigued after that drink then you know you've exceeded the balance point that your body loves to work at best. While this sounds simple enough, a recent American study found that 75% of participants were dehydrated over a long period. Assuming we are similar, we do need to get better at finding the sweet spot.

What are the advantages of getting the hydration balance right?

When you have the balance of water right you will have many benefits. One is more energy, as the cells are better able to transport the nutrients and hormones around, and therefore energy isn't wasted forcing that to happen.

You will also experience better memory, ability to focus, and will be able to use that extra energy towards moving faster, being stronger or digesting food at a more consistent rate.

Effective hydration will make heat loss effects less drastic in a



hot summer environment, and as usual with these things, being balanced in hydration has a positive effect on stopping you from being in a bad mood.

How does exercise affect hydration levels?

For those of you who have jumped on board the Park Run bandwagon or are wondering how best to link exercise with hydration, the equation is equally simple. When our bodies heat up, we send water out of our body, through the skin so it can evaporate, create a mist and cool us down. This obviously means less water in the body, and a harder job for the cells to transport nutrients etc.

In exercise or in the heat of summer, we sweat more and therefore lose more water. Having a small amount of extra water to ensure you are hydrated pre-work out (maybe a glass but not enough to be bloated), hydrating during a match or post exercise, and adding electrolytes (a type of salt that binds to water to limit its escape during sweat) will all stop our bodies from operating in a state of water shortage.

This means the body can use more energy on the job at hand. Again, there is a balance though so don't change your habits too much before exercise.

After exercise is a different story and it is always important to factor in rehydration after exercise. Again, there is no rule for how much each individual will lose in water through exercise

and therefore it is recommended that you weigh yourself (without your gym clothes) just before and just after a regular exercise session. The amount of change in weight is the amount lost in water and this should be replenished in order for an effective recovery.

The Sports Dieticians of Australia Guidelines state that you will continue to dehydrate for a while after exercise, so they recommend that you drink up to 1 ½ times the amount you lost. If you are down a kilo, drink close to 1.5 litres to have a perfect recovery.

Final thoughts

While it is great to be aware of your body's hydration levels, your body is much better at it than you will ever be. That is why the best advice when not exercising is to become more aware of thirst and respond to this. Keep your urine transparent yellow and if you are going to the toilet too much, or it comes out fluoro and stinky, then adjust your fluid intake accordingly.

When exercising, your thirst is not a good enough indicator so try out the weighing pre and post exercise method to get an idea of how much water you should drink once you're done.

Follow these tips and you'll be living your best hydrated life in no time.

Speak soon,
Tristan



A gardener's best friends...BIRDS & BEES

...and flutter-bys too!

It's time we talked about the birds and the bees.

No, not the facts-of-life birds and bees spiel reserved for the kids.

I'm talking birds and bees flying into our gardens, and butterflies too.

Good gardens shouldn't just be about plants. To maximise natural appeal and the enjoyment of our gardens, it's important we encourage a few fly-in guests such as native birds, pollinating bees and fabulous looking butterflies.

Little beats the natural song of birds to gladden a heart. Take the time to observe and listen and you'll quickly feel at one with nature.

Who hasn't watched in fascination at a honeyeater methodically eating his fill on a bloom?

Birds, especially native ones, can play a wonderful role in pollination – plus, they devour many nasty insects that work to destroy our plants.

Allow them to do their insect-eliminating jobs, while maybe netting those prized crops, and you can achieve a naturally balanced garden that shines without the need for toxic, costly sprays.

Not sure about bees, those stinging *Apis mellifera*?

Don't worry. Understand the full worth of these propagating marvels in transferring pollen from plant to plant and you will learn to love them.

Besides, they have no interest in stinging unless provoked.

The same goes for butterflies.

Observe a few delicate butterflies fluttering by on a summer's day and you'll feel free and young again, I guarantee it.

So how to encourage the birds, bees and butterflies to drop in?

Flight control

Plant plenty of Australian natives and you are a shoe-

in to get your garden's share of native birds.

The plants to grow are the free flowering ones like salvias, banksias, callistemons, correas, grevilleas, hakeas, melaleucas, penstemons, pokers and wattles.

Select a range so there are at least one or two flowering each month.

Birds like to flit through levels and layers, so including a few tallish trees, some mid-range shrubs and a range of low-growing grasses such as kangaroo grass (*Themeda*), tussock grass (*Poa labillardierei*) and Matt Rush (*Lomandra*) will do it.

If you want a bountiful vegie garden, birds can help here too.

The trick, insist permaculture experts, is to grow a few pollinator borders around your patch.

A pollinator border is an informal flowering border of shrubs and flowering plants that provides habitat and a nesting place for birds.

While birds might pinch the odd bit of produce, they're invaluable in nipping those insect problems in the bud.

Ensure there's water, too, for drinking and splashing. Maybe a birdbath or shallow bowl.

And don't be too quick to dispense with that old dead, hollowed tree. Those hollows could become home for a fledgling avian family that will bring happiness and hours of enjoyable birdwatching.

While you can offer occasional snacks, and it's estimated a third to more than half of all Australian households

regularly feed birds, many contend feeding native birds "artificial" food is unwise. The risk is they'll become reliant and less able to fend for themselves if the need arises.

The right buzz

Bees are a miracle ingredient of our life on this earth.

It's estimated a third of the food we consume relies on pollination by bees, and to a lesser extent by the pollination of birds and other insects.

Without bees, claim some authorities, human life on this planet would end.

So it's important to look after our bees, and also to invite them into our gardens to pollinate both ornamental and edible plants.

That means both the common honey bee (*Apis mellifera*), introduced here with European settlement, and the nearly 2000 species of native bees.

The native bee, for instance, far smaller than its European counterpart, is the one best able to pollinate many of the vegetable crops we grow.

Then there are bumblebees, controversially introduced to Tasmania in 1992 and still the subject of government discussion on whether their use as potent pollinators should be legalised Australia-wide.

While we might not want bee hives in our gardens, attracting bees is as simple as providing them with the plants they love – abelias, brachyscomes, buddleias, callistemons, daisies, flowering gums, grevilleas, lavenders, roses, salvias and the like.

They have their favourite colours too, with blue, purple, violet, white and yellow being top of the list.

Flutter-bys

Butterflies too play a minor role in plant propagation, but when you're as delicate and beautiful looking as a butterfly you don't need much else.

Again the main attractant is good habitat, a sunny, wind-free, calm corner containing daisies or daisy-like plants and maybe a water feature.

The types of plants worth growing are brachyscomes, callistemons, chocolate lilies (*Arthropodium strictum*), dianellas and native heaths.

