Frequently asked questions...and answers  
By Mary Wilson, Registered Dietitian

Q. Is margarine a better choice than butter?  
A. Soft (tub) or liquid margarines are generally a better choice than butter if you choose a margarine which does not contain trans fats and is low in saturated fat. Butter is high in saturated fats and contains cholesterol, both of which increase your blood cholesterol levels. Most margarines are made with vegetable fats and contain no cholesterol and many margarines (especially softer tub margarines) no longer contain trans fats. However, traditional hard (stick) margarines contain substantial amounts of trans fats. Generally, the softer the margarine is, the less saturated and trans fats it contains. Always check the food label to be informed of the amount of saturated and trans fat content per serving.

Q. Does rinsing cooked ground beef remove some of the fat from the meat?  
A. Yes. A study reported in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association found that a simple rinsing process reduces the fat content of cooked ground beef crumbles by up to 50 percent while not substantially reducing protein, iron, zinc, or vitamin B-12. This rinsing technique also allows you to take advantage of lower-priced, higher-fat ground beef while still enjoying the benefits of a leaner product. Brown ground beef in skillet over medium heat eight to 10 minutes or until no longer pink. Place beef in a lined mesh strainer or colander. Rinse ground beef under very hot water. Drain meat over a large bowl for five minutes. Watch the YouTube video.

Q. Is coconut water a healthy drink?  
A. Yes. Coconut water is the thin liquid inside young green coconuts – not to be confused with creamier coconut milk which is made by grating and squeezing the white coconut flesh of older coconuts. Coconut water has been hyped as a better alternative to sports drinks as well as having special healing properties. No question, coconut water is healthful and hydrating but it’s no short cut to good health. Coconut water contains lots of potassium along with other electrolytes such as sodium, magnesium, calcium and phosphorus. It’s also virtually fat-free and low in calories. Pure coconut water has about 50 calories per eight ounces. It’s ok to drink coconut water if you find it refreshing or want to replenish electrolytes after a long workout (though water and a banana would do just as well for most people). But don’t buy into the special healing hype.
Las Vegas Volunteer Appreciation Celebration

The annual Clark County Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Appreciation and Awards luncheon was held June 6 at the South Point Hotel and Casino. Master Gardeners were honored for the hours volunteered on community projects across the valley. This special event also marked the 20th anniversary of the Las Vegas Master Gardener program as well as the graduation of the Spring 2012 Master Gardener Class.

The Silver Trowel was awarded to Kimberly Williams (MG ’08) for contributing 482 Project hours in the past year. Trowel is the chairperson of the Nellis AFB Environmental Grove project as well as a docent with the Mojave Guides project at the Springs Preserve. Larry Nelson (MG ’04) received the Silver Phone award for volunteering 132 hours on the Home Gardening Help Line, 257-5555. He staffs the MG desk every Monday on the 8-11 a.m. shift.

Milestone pins were presented to Master Gardeners in recognition of their total volunteer service since joining the MG program. Richard Leifried has volunteered 18,000 hours since 1994. He has chaired numerous community projects over the years and is regular on the Help Line. Don Fabb (MG ’97) was recognized for his 14,500 hours of teaching and support to Community Gardens across the valley. Cliff Wood (MG ’02) has contributed 7,500 hours staffing "Ask a MG" information tables and at the Master Gardener Orchard. Richard Cutbirth (MG ’04) reached 6,250 volunteer hours at Acacia Park and at the Help Desk. Lee Heenan (MG ’96) received the 5,250 pin for her work propagating native plants and docenting, both at the Springs Preserve. In addition, 28 volunteers received milestone pins for reaching 100-750 volunteer hours, while 25 Master Gardeners were honored for volunteer contributions between 1,000-5,000 hours.

Master Gardeners are volunteers who have completed Cooperative Extension’s 80-hour horticulture training course and volunteer a minimum of 50 hours each year. Over 1,000 Las Vegas-area community members have completed the Master Gardener training, and 274 currently remain active in the program. Since the LV program began in 1992, Master Gardeners have contributed 307,727 hours of service to the community. The value of this volunteer service exceeds $6.5 million (based on $21.36/hour volunteer rate per http://independentscor.org/volunteer_time). Info: 702-257-5573
If you love water, you must love me!
By Anne Lindsay, Exercise Physiologist

Water is mostly what I am made of (besides ‘sugar, spice and everything nice’ of course!) Water, the liquid portion of our cells and tissues, makes up more than 60 percent of our body weight. It is the nutrient the body needs in the greatest amount. Every cell, tissue, organ and most every life-sustaining body process needs water to function.

Water needs vary greatly for each of us depending on the foods we eat, the temperature and humidity in which we live, our activity level and other factors. Generally speaking however, women need about 2.7 liters of water each day (91 ounces or about 11 cups) and men about 3.7 liters (125 ounces or 15 cups). Periods of intense activity or high temperatures result in higher sweating and will increase our water needs.

Water enters the body primarily through liquids and foods. Water leaves the body through evaporation of sweat, moisture of exhaled breath and excretion.

We maintain a balance of water in our bodies with help from electrolytes, such as potassium and sodium. Electrolytes are electrically charged particles found in body fluids. For example, if the sodium (salt) content is high, the body will stimulate thirst to drink and absorb more water to maintain fluid balance. During periods of high water loss (e.g. hot weather or exercise), it may be helpful to eat some salty snacks to help retain cellular fluids or stimulate thirst.

Here are some other suggestions to add more water to your diet:

- Choose water instead of soda at vending machines and restaurants
- Drink water, skim milk or juice (limited amounts) with meals and snacks
- Add extra water to juice or juice beverages
- Limit alcohol intake, as it increases urine output causing dehydration
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, as they contain water

Carrying around a water bottle is also an excellent habit to begin if you haven’t already. It allows you to drink normal amounts of water at regular intervals throughout the day. This makes it easy to absorb and retain fluid to keep you hydrated. Drinking large amounts of fluid all at once (e.g. when you feel thirsty) causes your stomach to fill up. Unfortunately our body cannot absorb it all at one time so much is lost through urination.

Get outside early in the morning and enjoy the beautiful parks and activities the Las Vegas Valley has to offer, but heed some advice. If you are going to exercise or participate in physical activities, especially outdoors, prepare for potential dehydration problems. Hydrate slowly for about 2 hours before your activity to allow time for fluid absorption and then drink periodically during the activity.

Beverages such as sports drinks loaded with electrolytes can provide fluid and help the stomach absorb fluid better. Be careful, however, that those containing carbohydrate concentrations don’t exceed 8 percent (or even less), as highly concentrated carbohydrate beverages reduce gastric emptying. Older adults (>65) should also rehydrate before and during exercise, but should consider the risks of excess water or sodium retention. Because older adults are slower to excrete water and electrolytes, too much water or sodium can cause the body to retain fluid and contribute to high blood pressure.

It is clear that water is an important part of our regular diet. We drink it by the glass, we get it from foods we eat and we even use it to prepare instant foods. I guess it’s a good thing water is easy to purchase and prepare because it we had to buy instant water, what on earth would we add to it?
**Money doesn’t grow on trees**

*Simple, age-appropriate ways to help your children learn about money and how to use it*

**Preschool-age:** Even kids as young as 5 can learn what money is — literally. Spread out various types of money on a table and play a game of remembering which person is on each type of paper money and who and what is on “heads” or “tails.” If your child has basic counting skills, ask questions such as “How many ways can you make a stack of coins that equals 50 cents?”

**Elementary-school-age:** Have a family discussion about “needs” vs. “wants.” You won’t have much trouble coming up with the needs list, but your child may list “basketball camp” as a “need,” while you may consider that simply a “want.” If, however, you believe your child has real talent and pricey but intensive skills training could lead to a scholarship opportunity in the future, it may be more of a “need.” The point: talk about it as a family. Kids will learn that there are some gray areas when it comes to how the family budget is allocated.

**High-school-age:** Ask your teen to manage and monitor the family’s monthly budget for eating out. (Computer-savvy teens might want to do a simple spreadsheet.) At the restaurant, ask them to figure the tip and the total. If the family goes over its budget before the month is out, talk about what happened and why.

*Source: National Endowment for Financial Education  HopeHealth—No. 10117*

---

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Southern Area has offices and offers programming in Clark, Lincoln and Southern Nye counties. Office locations and phone numbers are:

- **Caliente 775-726-3109**  
  360 Lincoln Street  
  P.O. Box 728, 89008

- **Logandale 702-397-2604**  
  1897 N. Moapa Valley Blvd.  
  P.O. Box 126, 89021

- **Las Vegas 702-222-3130**  
  8050 Paradise Road, 89123

- **Pahrump 775-727-5532**  
  1651 E. Calvada Blvd., 89048

- **Laughlin 702-299-1333/1334**  
  55 Civic Way, 89029

For more information on University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Southern Area programming, please call 702-222-3130 or visit the website at [www.unce.unr.edu/areas/southern](http://www.unce.unr.edu/areas/southern).