

Ask the experts

Don't ruffle your feathers, Australia's top experts are on hand to solve your dilemmas and give

Naturopath A NEW EARTH

Q I've noticed a lot of my friends raving on about a diet called the Earth Diet. Can you tell me a bit more about it? My friends have lost a whole lot of weight and insist it's the best diet ever.

Karen, via email.

EMMA SAYS The Earth Diet was started by Australian Liana Werner-Gray and its philosophies centre around eating food that is direct from the earth and unprocessed. It encourages eating organic foods that are in season and generally have an alkalising effect on your body. It is no wonder that your friend lost weight on this type of eating as it eliminates high sugar, trans fats and acidic foods.

I would suggest that you look at the Earth Diet as a healthy way of living rather than a 'diet' as then it will become a way of life. And this is what will keep weight off in the long term – clean, whole food just as nature intended it to be!



» Emma Sutherland is a successful naturopath and nutritionist.



GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR EXPERTS?

✉ Email them at experts@newidea.com.au

Pets

BUDGIE SNUGLER

Q My budgie seems out of sorts – he's off his seeds and is very quiet. What could be wrong? *Clare, via email.*

RACHELE SAYS The signs of illness are often non-specific, such as being quiet and off their food as you describe. Other signs include fluffed-up feathers, submissiveness, drinking more than usual and losing weight. A bird with any of these signs should see a vet straight away.

The most common diseases affecting budgerigars include respiratory diseases such as psittacosis (which can affect people), tumours, liver disease (often caused by an imbalance in the diet), mites (such as scaly face mite, which is fairly easy to treat but can make budgies feel unwell) and protozoal infections like

giardia and trichomonas.

Other diseases include megabacteria, which causes weight loss and failure to thrive, and psittacine beak, a feather disease that causes poor formation of tail and flight feathers.

Every budgie should visit a bird vet once a year for a general check-up and care advice.

For your bird, it may be as simple as a dietary issue, but it is worth investigating so you can get him on the right track.



» Rachele Lowe is a practising veterinarian and TV presenter.

you top tips and advice...

Money RIGHT MOVE

Q Is now the time to upgrade and buy a new home, or is it too risky? Should we renovate instead?

Trish, via email.

KOCHIE SAYS A home is a lifestyle as well as a financial investment. It's the only investment that truly affects your life and its quality and can put a smile on your face.

I don't think property prices are going to boom in the next 12 months, so I don't think you're going to miss out on any big jump in values.



Do your homework. Identify and then investigate the area you'd like to move to, and if you can pick up a bargain, go for it!

Make sure you get your finances in order, because the banks are going to be cracking down on lending this year.

If you're happy with the location of your home and just want to freshen things up a bit, you can undertake minor house renovations for minimal dollars. Small touches can go a long way to improving the look and value of your home.

» **David Koch is a leading financial commentator and co-host of Sunrise.**

Family TRUTH ABOUT MS

Q I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis last year. As a 28-year-old woman who is trying to build a career, one of the problems I now face is should I tell work colleagues about my condition? I don't want to limit my opportunities or to be given special treatment. However, it's getting to the point where I sometimes need people to know that even though I look physically fine, some days are a struggle.

Maggie, via email.

DR MICHAEL SAYS As you know, multiple sclerosis is a disease of the central nervous system. Its symptoms can be varied and unpredictable. While there is no cure, treatments are available to ease symptoms and modify the course of the disease. Depending on the severity of the

illness, it is likely that when tired, some people with MS may display symptoms such as tremors, which are very hard to conceal.

Since you are trying to build a career, the conventional wisdom is that you let your immediate bosses and close workmates know that you have a chronic illness and are working diligently with your doctors to manage it. This way, there will be no need to lie about your symptoms or make excuses about doctors' visits if you have to take time off for a check-up. As long as you are upfront with your colleagues and are clear about what you can and can't do, my experience is that most workplaces will be very accommodating.

Over the past 30 years, the federal government has introduced anti-discrimination laws to help protect people from discrimination and harassment, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 covers people with a physical illness as well.



» **Dr Michael Carr-Gregg is a child and adolescent psychologist.**

Love, sex & relationships

With Dr Pamela Stephenson-Connolly

YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD

Q My grandmother is extremely embarrassing. She is 78 and every time I go over to visit her, she tells me how fabulous her sex life is. My grandfather passed away when I was only young and she has had the same partner for around five years, but it's still hard to hear my granny has a better sex life than me. Is it normal for her to be so active in the bedroom? *Sarah, via email.*

A It is fantastic that she is enjoying herself sexually – don't you hope to be in the same situation when you're her age? Unfortunately, many of us in our society are very ageist about sex. Lovemaking is not just for young people, many grandparents have fulfilling sex lives. But it's also reasonable for you to express your wish that your grandmother might be more private about this. But tell her from me: 'You go girl!'

TOUCHY SUBJECT

Q I have been dating a guy for nearly three months and every time we get into a conversation about masturbation, he insists he has never pleased himself. He was in a long-term relationship before me, but I still refuse to believe he's never touched himself. Should I believe him? *Mary, via email.*

A There are people who have never self-pleasured. Some people miss that important step in their sexual development due to fear, threat of dire consequences and other reasons. Discovering how our own bodies work is a prelude to sharing pleasure with a partner so I wonder how – or if – he has overcome the lack of groundwork! But please drop the grilling. If he has masturbated, he doesn't want to admit it – and that is his right. If he has not, he will be feeling uncomfortable about your judgemental attitude. After all, is it more important to be helpful, or to be right?

