

You got a glacier-sized rock, he got 365-days-a-year passion – and your love's still growing. So how come your waistline's grown, too? Jane Worthington reports.

Sunday Telegraph

body + soul

rolly poly matrimony

- health
- 2 roly poly matrimony
- 4 in your face stand by me
- 6 on your mark bug off
- 11 wellbeing workout
- home
- 14 roly poly gardens
- 17 homes
- men only
- 20 mating rituals
- 23 boys' toys
- regulars
- 4 beauty flash
- 6 nature's way
- 8 star body
- 11 dream doctor
- 14 wine list
- 17 insideout
- 18 feng shui
- 21 stars
- 24 icon

**M**arried people all over Australia are filling vacuum to what experts are now calling a matrimony obesity epidemic – and it's only getting worse.

"Studies are proving that if you're living with a partner who is overweight, it increases your risk of being overweight," says Dr David Crawford, senior research fellow in nutrition at Deakin University.

"Alarmingly, Australia is in the grip of an obesity epidemic, with 65 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women, and 47 per cent of 16-year-olds in the same category," says Crawford.

"There's not a lot of research on how many kilos marriage piles on, but the marriage-weight gain link is fast emerging as a loner."

Crawford says that Australia was the first country to deal with obesity back in 1997 – but that early momentum has been lost.

"Health authorities seem unwilling to face up to what is a serious health problem that's only going to get worse," he says.



chubby trio

ourselves in a positive light." But once the rings are exchanged – love can turn into love handles.

Meredith Fuller, a psychologist from Melbourne, says there are three common scenarios when it comes to marriage weight gain traps. "The first is that many women have unrealistic expectations of living happily ever after."

"When the honeymoon is over, they're shocked to discover they're fighting with their partner, they're tired all the time, and they're not sleeping every two minutes. They may feel hurt about unresolved issues and feel afraid to voice their concerns. So they often turn to comfort food rather than speak up."

"The second factor for women, especially those who have children, is their lives tend to revolve more around the kitchen."

"The third factor is the letting-go syndrome," says Fuller. "Women often feel smug because they've 'got' their man and neglect their body and grooming maintenance. They'll exercise without telling their husbands."

Similarly, Fuller says that newlywed husbands are often put as complacent and forgo the gym, sporting activities and don't bother to monitor what they put in their mouths.

"Many become couch potatoes who hold their forks expectantly waiting for a home-cooked meal simply because they are now a married man."

is marriage making you fat?

Did you have your wedding cake and eat it, too? In marriage, you can't have your cake and eat it, too. Do this quiz to find out.

- Whenever your spouse or partner has leftovers, you will:
  - a) finish them off without thinking
  - b) keep them for tomorrow's lunch or dinner
  - c) feed them to the dog
- Since you married or started living with someone:
  - a) your eating habits have changed quite dramatically
  - b) you have modified your diet to become healthier
  - c) you are eating much the same way you did when you were single
- Since being single, your physical activity:
  - a) ceased. You've got an honorary degree in smooching sports from Footie University
  - b) increased – working out with your partner, or using the "buddy" system of heading has helped to bolster your motivation
  - c) stayed the same
- When you are serving a meal, portion sizes are:
  - a) extremely generous
  - b) proportionate to you and your partner's calorie requirements
  - c) exactly the same size as your partner's at every meal
- In times of emotional stress:
  - a) chocolate is your new best friend
  - b) you up your physical activity to release tension
  - c) you occasionally look to food for a little comfort



**D**ating decent

According to American psychologist Barbara Jacobson, author of *Weight Sex and Marriage* (Corgi Press), it is the end of courtship that is the culprit in the fit stakes.

"Courtship is the time of maximum human deception," writes Jacobson. "Never do we work as hard to present

top his & her diet tips

Sydney dietitian Ellie Hovardas and Nicole Senior, from the Dietitians Association of Australia, share these great secrets...

- Don't partner binge. Instead of eating your partner's leftovers, use them for tomorrow's lunch or dinner.
- Don't drink yourself fat. Many drinks, especially soft drinks, alcohol and cordial, are players in the obesity epidemic.
- And watch serving sizes as people generally consume what's put in front of them.
- Find a physical activity you and your partner both enjoy doing and stick to it.
- If you're a mum, join a gym with a crèche or start a parent-walking group with other mums.
- Keep your serving sizes proportionate. Because women

- don't have as much lean muscle mass as men, they only need smaller servings. As a general rule, if you are watching your weight, a serve of fish, meat or chicken should be no bigger than the size of the palm of your hand.
- Use smaller side plates instead of large dinner plates – you'll fill less on them and end up eating just what you need.
- Don't think your children's leftovers.
- Don't stay away from pre-packaged healthy meals such as Lean Cuisine. Try preparing meals with small-batch sauces instead of cream-based ones.
- Smell your food first. It's slow and you win a sensory experience – does it gulp. Food fetishists know that you eat less if you savour the taste.
- Share your dessert when you're dining out, or have two entrees instead of an entree and a main meal, then skip dessert altogether.



pounds of pleasure

Surprisingly, a study from nutritional sociologist Jeffrey Sobal, at Cornell University in the US, found that obese women were actually happier with their marriages than other women.

Sobal theorised this was because obese women recognised their decreased value in the marriage market, and lost the desire to assess other potential partners.

"Obese women are more likely to be satisfied with their current marital condition compared with opportunities for seeking a new partner," he says.

"In other words, women appear to internalise and accept the negative assessments of their obesity."

Overweight men, on the other hand, were more likely to have marital depression because their

wives may be nagging them to lose weight, leading to hostility and conflict, researchers concluded of the study on married people.

Interestingly, though, Fuller says that while we may be bigger in marriage, often after a divorce the overweight partner will slim down again.

"Initially this is because shock, grief and depression can curtail

the appetite, but there is also that old survival-of-the-fittest thing. You feel the need and motivation to change and grow before you can find a new partner," suggests Fuller.

"Also, in divorce, the masked unhappiness in the marriage is out of. People do not need to wear unhappy padding any more and start to shun comfort foods they used to rely on."