

## *Top 10 Fitness Myths*

### **1. You can spot reduce body fat from a particular area of your body**

This is my favourite.....if you were able to do this; I would currently be sunning myself on a beach in Antigua as I would have made millions by now. Unfortunately men and women store fat in different places, our so called 'problem areas'. For men this is generally around the abdomen and for women the bottom, tops of thighs and back of the upper arms. We do actually require a certain amount of fat for our bodies to function, though this differs for the individual. You can reduce body fat through eating a 'sensible' diet and through regular exercise, though you cannot do a specific exercise say for the abdominals that will reduce fat specifically in that region.

### **2. Crunches will give me six pack abdominals**

Abdominal exercises will work to strengthen and improve the appearance of muscle, though if you have a high amount of body fat then the muscle is hidden beneath this layer so you are unable to see it. That is not to say stop doing your abdominal exercises, though you may need to address your eating habits and add some cardiovascular exercise which increases your heart rate and makes you feel warmer to help burn calories.

### **3. Lifting weights will turn me into Arnold Schwarzenegger**

This is a particularly popular misconception with ladies. Yes if you perform exercises using weighted resistance correctly you will increase your muscle strength, though increasing your muscle size (hypertrophy) is dependant upon many other factors, including your genetics and your diet. Women do not possess high enough levels of testosterone to significantly increase their muscle size by just performing resistance exercises. To build muscle you would also require a higher than average intake of protein from your diet and a specialised programme tailored for this purpose. Also remember that not all body builders are drug free!

### **4. Exercising at a specific heart rate will burn more fat**

If you exercise at 50- 60% of your maximum heart rate you will burn more calories from fat!! Not true for most of us.....if you exercise you burn calories. You cannot dictate to your body which calories it burns and from where they come, you will use energy from carbohydrates, fats and proteins. So if you exercise at a higher heart rate percentage then surely you burn more total calories as you are working harder and require more energy. You would have to exercise for a lot longer to burn the same number of calories if you are working out at a lower level. So as long as you are feeling warm and cannot hold a full blown conversation on the treadmill, then you are on the right course.

### **5. stretching will prevent muscle soreness associated with exercise**

Post exercise muscle soreness, or delayed onset of muscular soreness (DOMS) cannot be prevented....however it can be eased by gentle stretching following a tough workout. DOMS generally subsides within 72 hours of exercise so try some gentle exercise and stretching the next day too....or maybe add in a massage.

### **6. Stretching before exercise prevents injuries**

This is an extremely 'old school' way of thinking.....recent research has found this may actually lead to injury. By stretching the muscles prior to exercise can lead to areas becoming more unstable, is it is far better to stretch following your workout.

### **7. You will lose more weight through dieting as opposed to exercising**

You may lose weight through dieting and exercise independently though it is far better to combine the two in your weight loss goal. You will lose weight more readily and it will stay off for longer. Think of it as a lifestyle change rather than a fad.

### **8. Stress does not make you fat**

Stress promotes the release of cortisol which is known as the 'stress hormone'. Higher levels are produced during stress and prolonged release can affect thyroid function, blood sugar levels and encourage storage of fat around the abdomen. Which is why you may find you eat more when you are stressed, particularly 'comfort foods' which are carbohydrate rich foods. So if you are prone to bouts of stress then it is essential to practice stress management techniques.

## 9. All carbohydrates are bad for you

Carbohydrates are not 'bad' for you, though carbohydrates can be 'simple' or 'complex'. Simple carbohydrates are smaller molecules and are of the sugary variety which can be easily broken down and stored within the body. Complex carbohydrates are smaller molecules linked together to form chains, which are harder to digest and so keep you feeling fuller for longer, such as rice, potatoes and pasta. You should eat more of the complex carbohydrate variety than the simple variety.

## 10. The more exercise you do the better results you will get

If you perform too much exercise this can lead to over training. You should try to plan your exercise routine and schedule in rest days, your body needs rest days to rejuvenate and prepare itself for your next training session. If you over train this can lead to over training syndrome which may present as increased fatigue, increased muscle soreness and fatigue. You need to balance your training and rest to ensure you have optimum performance.



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