



Commonly held myths about fitness and weight loss

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fact sheet

In this section I will discuss some commonly held myths about fitness in the general community. Myths are commonly held beliefs that are passed down the generations and that people hardly ever question. A myth can be quite destructive if it is false as people are quite reluctant to disbelieve the myths. A myth can be so strongly held that even scientific data proving that it is wrong is not believed. Don't fall for this trap. It is your health and wellbeing that are at stake so take advice from the experts.

Myth: don't work out with weights until you first lose body fat.

Fact: burning energy is what makes you lose fat and doing weights can be a great complement to other exercise. If you increase your muscle bulk you will increase the amount of calories that your body uses up and this will help you lose weight. Having a varied exercise program also helps you lose weight and prevents you from losing interest in exercise. Also getting toned is great for your self esteem and for your general wellbeing. So you don't have to feel that you have to lose the fat first before you can start doing weights or other exercise.

Myth: I don't have time to work out.

Fact: This is probably the most common complaint that I hear, and I have many a time used it as an excuse not to exercise in the past. Life is about priorities and you should put your health first. Being a doctor I certainly work long and hard hours but still I manage to do a minimum of two hours of exercise every week and you can too. Be creative! Take your bike to work, stop the car some distance from work and take a brisk walk. If you have children make them participate in your exercise so that you do it together. So there is time, you just have to use it.

Myth: being on your feet all day is all the exercise you need.

Fact: This is unfortunately not true. If you have ever tried to get in shape and lose weight you have probably noticed that you need to get moving quickly and sweat before your body reacts with any weight loss. It is recommended that you need to have your heart rate up to 150 for a sustained period of time before you get any cardiovascular fitness. I would also recommend that you do at least two hours of vigorous exercise a week to lose weight or get fit.

Myth: running is the only aerobic exercise that works.

Running is a great way to burn a lot of calories especially if you do it the right way. It can however be a strain on the body especially your knees and can become very boring if you are not into running. Running is certainly not the only aerobic exercise that works. Any sport that has a lot of movement will burn fat. Sports such as tennis, squash or swimming will also work just and can keep your interest in sports alive so that you incorporate it as a fun part of your life.

Myth: if your parents are fat you will be too.

Fact: if your parents are fat then you are not forced to go down the same road if you don't want to. There is a small genetic predisposition to becoming obese but the largest part of being a 'large' family is social habit. If your parents are fat they are less likely to exercise and they are more likely to overeat. As the children learn from their parents, they will learn all the bad habits that lead to obesity and this is why you will become fat. If you are willing to change your life style, including exercising more and eating the right foods, there is nothing that will hinder you from becoming slim and muscular. The potential is there so grab it.

Myth: stop exercising and your muscles turn to fat.

Fact: this is physiologically impossible as fat and muscle are two completely different tissues. It's like saying that muscle can turn into brain etc. impossible. What happens when you stop exercising is that your muscles get smaller and the fat that you have increases. This happens quite quickly within a couple of weeks so it's therefore important to be consistent with your exercise and do it every week. It's easy to get fat but darn difficult to get rid of it, as you probably know.

Myth: spot reducing works.

Fact: Some people have the idea that you can get rid of fat from specific places by exercising that part. Such as doing stomach crunches to get rid of abdominal fat. This does not work. The reason for this is the way the body breaks down fat. It doesn't matter what way you burn calories, fat will be taken from your bodies fat deposits in the same way, i.e. a general reduction in fat all over your body. Some places in the body such as the abdomen and hips have what's called long storage fat which gets broken down as a last resort. It's because of this long-term storage in the abdomen and hips that it is so difficult to get rid of this fat.

Myth: the more sit-ups I do the more rippled my abdominals will be.

Fact: doing sit-ups is very beneficial as it strengthens the back and promotes wellbeing. But if you want rippled abdominal muscles you need to get rid of all fat from your abdomen as even the smallest amount will obscure your abdominal muscles and they will not look ripped. So doing sit-ups is certainly good for you but so long as you have any abdominal fat they will not show up.

Myth: you must do at least 30 minutes of aerobics to burn fat.

Fact: this depends on how much you eat and how many calories you are getting. If you are eating less calories than your body is using, then any amount of aerobic exercise will burn fat. From my experience people often eat a lot more than their body is using up so in most cases you probably need more than 30 min of exercise to burn of your fat. It's up to you.

Myth: women who lift weights will end up looking like men.

Fact: this is not true. Women have different hormones and genetics than men. They don't have a lot of testosterone and their hormones don't promote muscle growth the same way that men do. Even full-time bodybuilders that train every day don't end up looking like men (unless they are on steroids). So if you are a woman, it's safe for you to do weights without being worried about looking like Hercules, it just won't happen.

Myth: the best personal trainers look the part.

Fact: this is not necessarily true. Like great tennis coaches, or other trainers you don't have to be an elite athlete to be a good trainer. You need to be a good teacher and good in inspiring and motivating people. People that are quite buffed up themselves may be spending more time on themselves than they spend on you. Ask other people that have had the same trainer. Make a choice on skills not appearance.

Myth: exercising during pregnancy will harm the unborn child.

Fact: so long as you are having a healthy diet and don't overdo the exercise it should not have any impact on your child. The child is very well protected in the abdomen with several layers of tissue and swimming in fluid so that it takes quite a large amount of force to harm a baby. Some medical conditions may prevent you from doing exercise during pregnancy such as cervical incompetence, so always check with your doctor before starting any vigorous exercise. In the vast majority of cases though no harm will come to the baby even after vigorous exercise, but it's important to check with your doctor before you start a new exercise program.

Please [contact us](#) about myths that you have heard or any questions you would like answered. This section is continually expanding as you ask more questions.