

Fitness Myths

Motivate yourself by empowering your Fitness Q & A, here are some popular myths debunked.

Myth 1 – Stretching is essential

Research shows that stretching before exercise actually increases your chance of getting injured and may decrease your workout performance. The best way to prepare your body for physical activity is with a three to five minute warm-up of easy walking, light cycling or gentle movement.

Myth 2 - Muscle turns into fat

"Fat and muscle are two totally separate types of tissue. They aren't interchangeable. People get fat when they stop working out because they continue to eat the same amount but burn off fewer calories. As a result, their unused muscles grow soft while they simultaneously gain excess body fat.

Myth 3 – Stay skinny with diet alone

You can lose weight simply by cutting back on calories. But combining exercise with diet will help you lose weight more quickly. More importantly, it will help you keep the pounds off permanently. The majority of participants in the National Weight Control Registry (a survey of thousands of people who have lost a significant amount of weight and kept it off for years) report that a consistent exercise program is one of their key weight maintenance strategies.

Myth 4 - Long & slow to zap fat

The so-called "fat burning zone" is about as real as 'The Twilight Zone.' "The workout that burns as many calories as possible, whether it's long and slow or fast and furious, is the best workout for fat burning and weight loss," she advises.

Myth 5 - Lose before lifting

Actually, if you're truly serious about losing weight, lifting weights two to three times a week is a must. "Building muscle helps maintain your metabolism even while you're resting and will help you slim down." When you combine diet with cardio exercise only, you tend to lose a lot of muscle mass; weight training helps preserve muscle so more of your weight loss is truly from fat.

Myth 6 – High reps rule

Choose a weight you can lift at least eight times keeping good form but no more than 15 times without your muscle feeling the challenge. If you can do more reps than that, the weight you're using isn't heavy enough to give you results. Decreasing body fat will help you see the shape of the muscles underneath.

Myth 7 – Crunch away ab flab

There's no such thing as spot reducing -- that is, you can't magically zap the fat from an area by exercising it. You could do 5,000 crunches a day and still not see any improvements until you burn the layer of fat over your ab muscles, which is done by trimming your diet and burning more calories through cardio exercise.

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Myth 8 – Beef up to gain muscle

"The body uses protein, carbs and fat to build muscle," Any excess protein you eat beyond what your body needs will simply be expelled through your urine or stored as body fat. Your best bet is to eat a balanced diet that includes a variety of vitamins and minerals and enough calories to build strong, shapely muscles.