Busting the Top Ten Fitness Myths

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Myth#10-You need to drink six to eight glasses of water a day

In February 2004, after reviewing more than 400 studies, the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine concluded that men need about 15 cups of fluid a day and women about 11. But that includes fluids from all beverages, including the alcoholic and caffeinated kinds, and the water in food. The vast majority of Americans already get that much liquid in their everyday diets.

Water loss increases after exercise, but most people naturally feel thirsty and drink more fluids without being prompted. However, people over the age of 65 or children should pay special attention to their fluid intake, since the sense of thirst isn't as sharp. Strong smelling, dark yellow urine indicates that you need to drink more. Finally, while any beverage counts toward your daily intake, plain tap water does offer several advantages: It's cheap, thirst quenching, and calorie-free.

Myth #9 Lifting heavy weights add bulk

Adults may or may not become "bulky" when lifting heavy weights. Women are told to lift weights with high repetitions to avoid "bulk". These both are determined by our genetics, not our lifting routine.

Women are less likely than men to add tremendous bulk when lifting weights. High levels of testosterone are necessary for muscles to add large amounts of bulk. The genetics of each individual determine who can add bulk and who cannot.

This is perhaps the most common myth women fall for and it couldn't be farther from the truth. In fact, weight training is often the easiest and quickest way for women to look leaner, more sculpted and toned. You'd have to be taking steroids to achieve the bulked-up look most body builders have, so don't be afraid of weights. Incorporate strength training twice a week into your exercise program because it will help protect you from injury, tone your muscles, help prevent osteoporosis and burn excess body fat, even when you are resting.

Myth #8 You burn more fat when you exercise at a low intensity for a long amount of time.

The most efficient way to burn fat is to combine intense training in short spurts with a nutritious diet. For example, 30 minutes of cycling in intervals, where you continuously vary your speed, intensity and pace, burns more calories than a slow one-hour walk. And it keeps burning them when you stop because your metabolism stays elevated for a few hours after you exercise.

Myth #7 You can lose weight by dieting

More than 90% of all people who lose weight by dieting gain it back. Change your eating habits and choose to eat more fruits and vegetables and less fat. Dieting is temporary deprivation. Eating healthy means developing a new mindset. The real trick to losing weight is a lifelong pattern of moderate exercise, healthy diet, and 7-8 hours sleep/night.

Myth #6 The best time to exercise is early in the morning

Not true. There is no one best time to exercise. The best time is the time that appeals to you and fits into your schedule. Some folks love to jump-start their day with a morning workout, while others swear that exercising after the workday is over is a great way to energize for the evening and eliminate stress.

Myth #5 Pasta and bread are fattening

Anything is fattening! Lettuce can be stored as fat! Any food or drink which contains calories can be stored as body fat if it causes your blood sugar level to exceed what the body needs at that time. Bread and pasta area actually great sources of complex carbohydrates! The key is *how much* you eat *and when* you eat it.

Myth #4 if you stop an exercise program your muscle will turn to fat

Fat cannot turn into muscle any more than a rock can turn into water. They are two different components. When you stop working out, you lose muscle tone and gain fat, but one doesn't turn into the other.

Myth #3 You'll burn more calories jogging a mile than walking a mile

Caloric expenditure is 62 calories per 100 pounds body weight per mile traveled (walked or jogged). For example, if you weigh 150 pounds, you expend 93 calories per mile walked or jogged (62 x 1.5). Of course, if you're jogging, you'll cover the distance in less time than if you're walking. Thus, you'll burn more calories in a given period of time if you're jogging.

Myth #2 Stretching before exercise boosts performance and prevents injury, and getting a massage afterward speeds recovery.

Two large reviews, published in 2004 and 2005, failed to support the notion that stretching your muscles before exercise prevents injury or post-exercise muscle soreness. Similarly, at least five clinical trials now show that getting a massage after exercise doesn't help restore muscle strength and does little to soothe aching muscles.

The component that is most often left out of a fitness program is stretching. If you are like most people, you probably think that right after you are finished your last set, you should head for the showers. However, you should really finish off with some stretching, as it will increase the range of motion in your muscles and joints, which will thus allow you to perform your weightlifting exercises over a greater range of motion, as well as target more muscle fibers throughout the lift.

Finally, when you finish off your workout with some stretching, you reduce the severity of DOMS (delayed onset muscle soreness), which you will most likely greatly appreciate the next morning.

And…… Fitness Myth #1

You can lose fat from a specific part of your body by doing an exercise for that part of your body. For example, abdominal crunches will remove fat from your abdominal area.

You can't spot reduce! You cannot control where fat is removed from your body. The one thing everyone wants is a flat stomach. No matter how many sit-ups you do it won't be flat if you have a layer of fat covering your muscles. Your time would be much better spent doing some quality cardio sessions and making sure you're eating well, which would help you lose body fat than doing more sit-ups.

Many exercise devices are marketed to spot reduce or spot tone a specific body part. The idea is that by using their device you will be able to tone the inner thighs, for example. This is simply not true.

Muscles utilize blood glucose, cellular energy stores, and blood fat for energy. Fat is not pulled from the area it is stored in to serve as energy in its own "neighborhood". Once blood glucose levels are low, a hormonal reaction is triggered to metabolize stored fat for conversion to glucose for energy. Fat deposits are tapped in multiple places around the body, not adjacent to the body part requiring the need for energy.

A properly structured strength and conditioning program will result in a leaner body appearance (when combined with proper eating habits.) This is in part due to fat loss and muscle hypertrophy (size increase). The amount of toning is, unfortunately, bases on one's genetic predisposition for muscle growth and fat storage. We cannot, unfortunately, change how our body is programmed to add muscle and store fat.

Patti Komara's Bio

Patti Komara has owned a gymnastics school in Dyer, Indiana since 1969 offering gymnastics, dance, swimming, and a fitness-based educational preschool called Gym-N-Learn. Patti began speaking at national seminars in 1981 and has led hundreds of training workshops. Patti's Tumblebear Connection has produced more than 80 instructional DVDs. She has written books on yearly lesson plans for The internationally known Tumblebear Gym Program, School-age Gymnastics, Dancing GymBears, YogaBears, CheerBears, Gym-N-Learn, and her very successful Swim Program. Patti co-authored the original USAG preschool KAT certification program. In 2003 she was named USAG Business Leader of the Year. In 2005 Patti was selected as Client of the Year by Action International and in 2006 was given the national service award by USAG. In 2009 Patti began formal consulting for those in our industry and in 2010 her gym, Patti's All-American, was named in her local newspaper as "Best of the Region" once again. Patti has over 6000 subscribers to her "In the Loop Monthly E-Newsletter" which she has published since February 2007.