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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

7 Cardio Myths

Is cardio the answer for fat loss? There are many different views on what type of cardio is best, as well as how long and how often you need to perform it if you're trying to lose weight. And what if you're trying to bulk up? Will cardio undermine your efforts? The number of theories out there is enough to make your head spin. Here are some common myths surrounding this controversial topic.

Myth No. 1: Slow and steady cardio is the best way to burn fat.

The truth: Although you may be able to perform this "easier" type of cardio for a longer period of time, thus burning more calories while you are doing it, it is what happens afterward that is more significant. With high intensity interval training, which is cardio performed at a much more intense level, your body's metabolism will remain higher for a longer period after exercising. As well, your body will expend a greater number of calories throughout the day in order to repair itself after the hard workout. Overall, this results in a greater number of total calories burned.

Myth No. 2: The more cardio you do, the more you can eat.

The truth: Don't we all wish this were true? So many people operate under the false notion that they can eat a double cheeseburger, and then just go burn it off at the gym. First off, do you realize that it would take about 2 hours of running to burn that many calories? I bet that burger doesn't look so appetizing now. Second, if you go by this principle, you will likely spend way too much time doing cardio, which will result in overtraining and possible injury.

Myth No. 3: Wearing weights while you do cardio helps you burn more fat.

The truth: If you think those two-pound ankle straps are going to launch you into fat-burning mode, think again. Not only are they not heavy enough to significantly impact your calories burnt, they will also throw off your balance, which could lead to injury. You're better off focusing on raising the intensity of your cardio rather than the amount of resistance. If your goal is to get stronger, get off the cardio machine and into the weight room; that is where strength progress is made.

Myth No. 4: You should do the same type of cardio every day if you want to see progress.

The truth: Just as in weight training, if you perform the same movement day in and day out, your body will adapt and become more “efficient.” You will end up burning fewer and fewer calories, and reaching the dreaded plateau. Instead, try to mix it up by running one day, biking the next, and possibly venturing onto the elliptical machine on the third day. In addition to changing machines, don’t forget to vary the intensity of your exercises. This will force your body to alternate between periods of being pushed to its limits and resting, which will ensure that progress is made.

Myth No. 5: If you only have 10 minutes to do cardio, you might as well skip it.

The truth: 10 minutes is 10 minutes! When it comes to burning fat, every movement you make throughout the day counts; even the simple act of lifting your coffee cup burns calories. You’re much better off just making what you can out of those 10 minutes. If you frequently find yourself lacking time to do cardio, try breaking your workout into segments: 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes at lunch and 10 minutes at night -- whatever works best for you.

Myth No. 6: You shouldn’t eat before cardio if you want to lose body fat.

The truth: This is a much-debated topic, and it basically boils down to the type of cardio you are doing. If it is a slow and steady, moderately paced workout, then you don’t need to eat; working out on an empty stomach may even help you access your fat stores faster. If you plan on doing wind sprints, however, you must eat beforehand. This type of cardio requires glucose for fuel, so not eating will throw your body into a catabolic state (during which you burn muscle tissue) and you won’t even be able to maintain the intensity this workout requires. You are best off eating a small meal that contains carbohydrates and protein about an hour beforehand.

Myth No. 7: Cardio demands little concentration, so you can entertain yourself by reading or watching TV.

The truth: If you are able to fully focus on a TV or a magazine while performing cardio, you are not working hard enough. Your pace should be fast enough that you are only able to focus on the task at hand. If it is “easy” day, you may be able to get away with watching some TV; however, a better option would be to pay attention to your movements to ensure that you are using proper form.