

Exercise and Nutrition: Shattering the Myths

Jennifer Gatz, M.A.
Exercise Physiologist

Exercise Myth # 1

- If you are not going to work out hard, and often, exercise is a waste of time. Otherwise known as “no pain, no gain”.
- A sensible exercise program should place a reasonable demand on the cardiorespiratory and musculoskeletal systems to improve function, without significantly increasing the risk of injury.
- Research continues to show that any exercise for as little as an hour per week can reduce the risk of heart disease.

Exercise Myth # 2

- You will burn more fat if you exercise longer at a lower intensity.
- It is not necessarily the percentage of exercise energy coming from fat that should be the main concern but the total energy cost. The faster you walk, swim, cycle or run, the more calories you use per minute.

Exercise Myth # 3

- If you want to lose weight, stay away from strength training because you will bulk up.
- Strength training helps maintain muscle mass and decrease body fat percentage. Most people, especially women, do not have the genetic potential to develop large, bulky muscles.

Exercise Myth # 4

- Spot reducing is possible.
- Spot reducing is not possible. Overall body fat must be reduced to lose fat in any one particular area. Regular exercise training combining aerobic conditioning and strength training with a sensible diet will reduce excess body fat.

Exercise Myth # 5

- If you exercise, you can eat whatever you want.
- Regular physical activity is one of the most important factors for successful long term weight management. A sound nutrition plan must complement a regular exercise program.

Nutrition Myth # 1

- Carbohydrates are fattening and should be limited when trying to lose weight.
- Starch is an important source of energy for your body. Whole grain breads, rice and pasta, beans and veggies like squash, yams, sweet potatoes, turnips, beets and carrots are rich in complex carbohydrates.
- Foods high in starch can be low in fat and calories. They become high in fat and calories when eaten in large amounts or with high fat toppings.

Nutrition Myth # 2

- Low fat or no fat means no calories.
- Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories. Processed low/no fat foods that have extra sugar, flour or starch thickeners to make them taste better may still have a lot of calories.

Nutrition Myth # 3

- High protein/low carbohydrate diets are a healthy way to lose weight.
- These diets often lack key nutrients found in carbohydrate foods.
- Many of these diets allow a lot of food high in fat (i.e. bacon & cheese). High fat diets can raise blood cholesterol levels and increase a persons risk for heart disease and cancer.
- These diets may cause rapid weight loss but most of it is in water weight and lean tissue, not fat.

Nutrition Myth # 4

- **Skipping meals is a good way to lose weight.**
- If you skip meals during the day, you are more likely to make up for those missing calories by snacking or eating more at the next meal.
- Skipping meals, especially breakfast will decrease your metabolism.
- A healthier way to lose weight is to eat many small meals throughout the day.

Nutrition Myth # 5

- Fast foods are always an unhealthy choice and you should not eat them while on a weight loss program.
- Fast foods can be part of a healthy weight loss program by choosing salads without high calorie toppings and/or grilled foods instead of fried.
- Eating fried fast food or chocolate sparingly as a special treat is fine. In small amounts, these foods can still be part of a healthy eating plan.