Most Common Exercise Myths

Exercise Myth 1. You Will Burn More Fat If You Exercise Longer at a Lower Intensity. The most important focus in exercise and fat weight control is not the percentage of exercise energy coming from fat but the total energy cost, or how many calories are burned during the activity. The faster you walk, step or run, for example, the more calories you use per minute. However, high-intensity exercise is difficult to sustain if you are just beginning or returning to exercise, so you may not exercise very long at this level. It is safer, and more practical, to start out at a lower intensity and work your way up gradually.

Exercise Myth 2. If You’re Not Going to Work Out Hard and Often, Exercise Is a Waste of Time. This kind of thinking keeps a lot of people from maintaining or even starting an exercise program. Research continues to show that any exercise is better than none. For example, regular walking or gardening for as little as an hour a week has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease.

Exercise Myth 3. Yoga Is a Completely Gentle and Safe Exercise. Yoga is an excellent form of exercise, but some styles are quite rigorous and demanding both physically and mentally. As with any form of exercise, qualified, careful instruction is necessary for a safe, effective workout.

Exercise Myth 4. If You Exercise Long and Hard Enough, You Will Always Get the Results You Want. In reality, genetics plays an important role in how people respond to exercise. Studies have shown a wide variation in how different exercisers respond to the same training program. Your development of strength, speed and endurance may be very different from that of other people you know.

Exercise Myth 5. Exercise Is One Sure Way to Lose All the Weight You Desire. As with all responses to exercise, weight gain or loss is impacted by many factors, including dietary intake and genetics. All individuals will not lose the same amount of weight on the same exercise program. It is possible to be active and overweight. However, although exercise alone cannot guarantee your ideal weight, regular physical activity is one of the most important factors for successful long-term weight management.

Exercise Myth 6. If You Want to Lose Weight, Stay Away From Strength Training Because You Will Bulk Up. Most exercise experts believe that cardiovascular exercise and strength training are both valuable for maintaining a healthy weight. Strength training helps maintain muscle mass and decrease body fat percentage.

Exercise Myth 7. Water Fitness Programs Are Primarily for Older People or Exercisers With Injuries. Recent research has shown that water fitness programs can be highly challenging and effective for both improving fitness and losing weight. Even top athletes integrate water fitness workouts into their training programs.

Exercise Myth 8. The Health and Fitness Benefits of Mind-Body Exercise Like Tai Chi and Yoga Are Questionable. In fact, research showing the benefits of these exercises continues to grow. Tai chi, for example, has been shown to help treat low-back pain and fibromyalgia. Improved flexibility, balance, coordination, posture, strength and stress management are just some of the potential results of mind-body exercise.

Exercise Myth 9. Home Workouts Are Fine, But Going to a Gym Is the Best Way to Get Fit. Research has shown that some people find it easier to stick to a home-based fitness program. In spite of all the hype on trendy exercise programs and facilities, the “best” program for you is the one you will participate in consistently.

Exercise Myth 10. Spot reducing is possible - Spot reducing is not possible. The concept is based on the flawed notion that it is possible to “burn off” fat from a specific part of the body by selectively exercising that area. However, numerous studies have refuted this claim. Only regular exercise training (aerobic and strength) and a sensible diet can eliminate excess body fat.

Exercise Myth 11. Exercise requires a hefty time commitment. Any amount of regular exercise contributes to better overall health and well-being. ACE recommends a total of at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day to maintain health and reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer. Individuals desiring to lose weight and keep it off are advised to accumulate 60 minutes of physical activity each day.
Exercise Myth 12. If you exercise, you can eat whatever you want. A sound nutrition program goes hand-in-hand with a sound exercise regimen. If the goal is to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, consumers should add more fruits and vegetables to the diet, avoid processed high-sugar foods and control portion size.

Exercise Myth 13. There’s a magic bullet or quick fix out there somewhere. There is no quick fix. Many nutritional supplements are marketed using deceptive, misleading, or fraudulent advertising. A well-balanced diet coupled with regular exercise is still the safest and most effective way to achieve weight loss or performance goals.

Exercise Myth 14. Exercise Over-stimulates the appetite leading to weight gain. Physical activity is one of the most important behavioral factors in enhancing weight loss maintenance and improving long-term weight loss outcomes. Research study showed a high dose of physical activity (275 minutes above baseline levels) contributed to the greatest observed weight loss after a 24-month intervention. The scientific literature includes additional evidence to support physical activity, adding that a growing body of literature suggests the importance of physical activity to improve long-term weight loss following bariatric surgery. Energy/diet restriction combined with physical activity will increase weight loss as compared to diet alone.

| Prevent weight gain | 150-250 minutes/week of moderate-intensity physical activity is associated with prevention of weight gain |
| Weight loss | 150-250 minutes/week of moderate-intensity physical activity provides only modest weight loss. Greater amounts (ie. >250) provide clinically significant weight loss. |
| For weight maintenance after weight loss | There is some evidence that >250 minutes/week of moderate-intensity physical activity will prevent weight re-gain. |

ACSM recommends that adults participate in at least 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity physical activity to prevent significant weight gain and reduce associated chronic disease risk factors. For most adults, this amount of physical activity can be easily achieved in 30 minutes/day, five days a week. Overweight and obese individuals will most likely experience greater weight reduction and prevent weight regain with 250+ minutes/week of moderate-intensity physical activity. ACSM also recommends strength training as part of this regimen to increase fat-free mass and further reduce health risks.

Exercise Myth 15. Running is the best way to get fit. The fact is that there is no one best way to get fit. But getting fit physically and mentally is a process that takes time and patience.

Exercise Myth 16. Warm up before working out isn’t necessary. Wrong. You have to warm up before starting any exercise program. Warming up your major muscles and dynamically stretching before your workout and stretching post workout, decreases your risk of injury, including tendinitis.

Exercise Myth 17. Exercising on an empty stomach burns more calories. Exercising on an empty stomach burns calories. But this is not true. Since exercise burns calories and an empty stomach has no calories to burn. Your body needs energy to workout and if you are working on an empty stomach, you may feel dizziness or event faint in extreme situations. You may need a light snack before working out.