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The Big Debate: Cardio vs. training

CARDIO

Some say that cardio is very efficient for fat loss while others say it actually makes you soft and flabby. Aerobic exercise has been touted as a way to reduce weight. Aerobic exercise improves cardiovascular fitness. Regular aerobic exercise causes our lungs to process more oxygen with less effort, our heart to pump more blood in fewer beats and increasing our body's endurance and efficiency.

With weight loss in mind, you typically burn fat, as well as carbohydrates in the form of stored glycogen. Ultimately, however, you're only burning calories during the exercise. If you burn 300 calories during a treadmill session and you drink a Gatorade with 300 calories, you should not expect to lose weight; it's a zero-energy balance. The "fat-burning zone" for cardio session is from 20 to 60 minutes with no rest or little rest and should be done at 60-85 percent of your maximum heart rate to be effective.

Steady-state aerobic exercise alone is not particularly great for weight loss, according to a study in the journal Obesity. Because of its repetitive nature or overuse of joints, the common risks associated with cardio exercise include stress fractures, plantar fasciitis, heel spurs, shin splints, Achilles tendon and calf pain.

And the winner is...

Improving your health should be the primary goal of any exercise program. Both cardio and weight training can play a significant role in healthy weight management, as long as you make exercise a part of your daily life. Cardio without strength training leads to weight loss, but also to loss of lean muscle tissue.

Weight training without cardio builds and maintains muscle mass, boosts stamina and strengthens bones, but doesn't provide the level of cardiovascular benefits you get from aerobic exercise. Although you burn more calories during aerobic exercise such as running, research has suggested that excess consumption of oxygen after exercise is greater after weight training than after aerobic exercise.

The added benefit is that you continue to burn up to an additional 10 calories per hour for up to 36 hours after a weight-training session, as a result of a temporary increase in metabolism. In addition, weight training gives you lesser chance of injuries when doing cardio exercise and, with a good cardiovascular fitness, it makes your weight training

WEIGHT TRAINING

For many people, weight training makes them feel physically fit and strong while it makes others feel bulky and intimidating.

The most important value of weight training as a weight-loss tool is boosting metabolism and the effect is on caloric burn after the workout. That may help explain why it is so essential to losing fat. A study published in The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research found that high-volume resistance training increased resting energy expenditure by about 8 percent for up to 72 hours after a workout.

Resistance training can play an important role in the development of self-confidence and body satisfaction by making you stronger. That includes toned muscles, a decreased risk of osteoporosis, better coordination and balance, and the prevention of injuries that result from weak muscles. Depending on your genes and age, you can only grow as much muscle as you want without having to worry that you will look like The Hulk unless muscle-enhancing supplements are involved.

All in all, calories you burn during strength training include calories burned during the activity, calories burned on "post-workout" and calories burned from gained muscle.

session much more efficient and productive.

You already know that you lose weight when you burn more calories than you eat. The most effective way to do that is with a combination of cardio, strength training and monitoring your diet carefully. And you will be healthy -- and look great naked!

DID YOU NOW?

Losing a pound of fat requires 3,500 calories. So, every 3,500 calories you burn is one less pound of fat you weigh. So how much cardio do you need to burn 1 pound of fat? Unfortunately the answer is about 6 hours! The average amount of calories you burn doing cardio for one hour is about 600.