

The Top 5 Fat Loss Myths

There are so many fat loss myths out there in "exercise-land" that I was hired by Men's Fitness magazine to write about one myth each month. After all, by now you've probably heard that if you don't do 60-minutes of cardio in your fat burning zone on an empty stomach while Venus is in line with Jupiter, you'll never burn fat. The problem with myths is that not only are they wrong and give false hope to millions of people trying to lose weight, but they also waste your time and mental effort. I have also seen these myths used as justification for cheating on a diet, watching countless men and women justify their "treats" because they believe they are on some type of magical exercise program or nutrition plan. I could go on for days about fitness myths, but I cut my list from 30 down to the Top 5 Fat Loss Workout Myths today. I'll save the other 25 for future newsletters.

Myth #1: You have to do cardio first thing in the morning on an empty stomach. Relax. You don't have to hop on the treadmill at 4:30am every morning. Let's allow common sense to dictate when and how you exercise. If you want to work out first thing in the morning, and I know that is the best time for many readers, by all means, go ahead and do it. There's nothing magical about this time - although it is often the only time many of day many people have to themselves. We need to think "outside of the hour" of exercise and realize that calorie burning and fat burning goes on for 24-hours. Forget about the theories and look at the big picture. It doesn't matter when you exercise - as long as you exercise intensely and consistently. Focus on relatively high-intensity workouts to increase your metabolism for as many hours after exercise as possible. That is best done with interval training and resistance training.

Myth #2: You have to do your cardio in your "fat burning zone". Again, nonsense. While you might burn a larger proportion of total calories as fat when you exercise in your fat burning zone, you burn fewer calories overall by exercising at such a low intensity. When you increase your workout intensity and get out of your so-called "fat burning zone", you burn more total calories, and as a result, more fat. In addition, the "fat burning zone" training doesn't put "turbulence" on your muscles...so you don't burn many calories in the post-exercise time period. But with interval training, you burn a significant amount of calories for hours after training, and that leads to more fat loss. I've worked with hundreds of people that have avoided the fat burning zone while still managing to lose dozens of pounds of fat. The "fat burning zone" is one of the biggest fitness myths of all time.

Myth #3: You have to do cardio for 20 minutes before you burn fat. When I hear this, I picture a fat-burning switch in my body that turns on only after I've been doing "cardio" for 20 minutes. But what if I only exercise for 19 minutes and 59 seconds? Are you telling me that I won't have burned any fat? That's ridiculous. What if I did it on an empty stomach in the morning and in my target heart rate zone? (read that one sarcastically!) I'll say it one last time. We need to be more concerned with our 24-hour metabolism, not how much fat or even how many calories are burned during the workout.

Myth 4: Drinking ice cold water will help you burn calories and lose fat. Standing in line at the grocery store is a great place to pick up the latest fat loss myths. You'll also find this one all over the Internet. This myth often comes along with some calculations showing that by drinking 8 glasses of ice-cold water you can burn 70 calories per day. I don't believe that actually holds true in real life. Regardless, drinking cold water is not going to burn any more fat off your body than drinking room temperature water. Don't get me wrong, I strongly believe you should drink 12 glasses of water per day, but the temperature of your water won't have any effect on your overall fat loss success.

Myth #5: Adding one pound of muscle will burn 50 extra calories each day. Uh-oh, now I'm cutting down a myth that supports my use of strength training in a fat loss program. But I have an obligation to set the record straight about this extremely prevalent myth (even though I just saw a big name fitness expert perpetuate this myth in a recent article!). This myth sounds so good. Add a pound of muscle, boost your metabolism 50 calories. That doesn't seem out of line at all. But do the math for a guy that puts on 30 pounds of muscle. Does his metabolism really increase by 1500 calories? Absolutely not. For an average guy, that would require his resting metabolism to increase from 2500 calories to 4000 calories per day. How would he be able to keep any of that muscle with a metabolism like that? He'd have to eat like a pig forever. So when you look at the big picture, you can see this little myth start to fall apart. That's not to say you should stop your strength training, but just don't use this myth as an excuse to cheat on your diet.

Bonus Myth: Negative Calorie Foods Cause You to Lose Weight According to the "experts", a negative calorie food requires more energy to digest than it provides you when you eat it. And included in the negative calorie food list are apples and bananas. So by this logic, I would actually starve to death if I had nothing to eat but apples (because I would have a net energy loss from eating a so-called "negative calorie" food). There is no such thing as a negative calorie food. It's a shame that people are out there promoting this stuff, and it's too bad that so many people fall for it. Remember the old phrase, "if it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't true". Instead, let the common sense fat loss principles apply. It's going to take consistent effort, working hard at your workouts and with your nutrition to get the results you want.

About the Author

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