



Back To Fitness School *By Joe Stein, President*



Now that summer sun and fun are behind us, and the kids are back in school, it's time for *us* to go back to school, too...Fitness School. Class will begin with a quiz about mythology. Not Zeus and Mars, but urban exercise legends and fitness myths.

Myth: If a person exercises regularly, they can eat whatever they want.

Fact: Each pound of excess weight stores 3,500 calories of energy. The average person burns 100 calories running a mile. You would have to run from Red Bank to Woodbridge to burn a super-sized fast food lunch and a calorie-laden dinner. The way to maintain normal weight is to eat sensibly. Even Mercury couldn't run fast or far enough to overindulge on a regular basis.

Myth: To stay fit, one needs to have exercise equipment in the basement.

Fact: Having equipment and using it effectively on a regular basis are two different things. If your exercise equipment is serving as clothes hangers instead of helping you keep fit, then it's time to call a pro for help.

Myth: Women who lift weights will develop big muscles.

Fact: Unless a woman takes steroids, it's unlikely she'll develop large, bulky muscles. Men are capable of bulking up due to the presence of testosterone. Strength training is a great way for a woman to maintain a strong, lean, and healthy body.

Myth: Doing numerous sit-ups will flatten my potbelly.

Fact: Abdominal exercises will strengthen your muscles. But having strong abdominal muscles and a flat belly are not the same. Strong abs are important for posture, core stability, functional fitness, and for protecting your lower back. In fact, one may have strong abs, but they might be hiding under a layer of fat. To have strong abs that show, vary your ab routine, reduce your caloric intake and devote more time to doing cardio.

Myth: One can turn fat into muscle if they exercise every day.

Fact: Fat comes from fat cells. Muscle comes from muscle cells. One can replace the other, but cannot reproduce it. Only slick infomercials have turned fat into gold. With proper nutrition, cardio, strength training, and old-fashion patience, fat stores can be reduced and muscle mass increased.

Myth: The best way to lose weight is to diet.

Fact: Losing weight is relatively easy; keeping it off is difficult. Dieting is a temporary deprivation that sets you up for failure. Over ninety percent of people who have used dieting alone have gained the weight back. The key to long-term weight management is two fold: exercise and modification of eating habits. Mindful eating involves subtle changes in food choices and portion control. Changes you can live with for the rest of your life.

Myth: One can burn more calories eating hot or spicy foods.

Fact: Like many urban legends, this one has its basis in truth. The energy requirement to metabolize the food we consume is called the TEF, or thermogenic effect of food. Most foods use about ten percent of their calorie content during the digestion process. A 300-calorie donut needs about thirty calories to be digested. Food that is cold, hot or spicy may require a fifteen percent TEF to be digested. Adding hot salsa to an extra cheese quesadilla will not keep the weight off.

Myth: If a person has lived like Bacchus for many years, it's too late to get in shape.

Fact: Much research shows that no matter when you begin, exercise and lifestyle changes can improve the quality of your life. You may not be mistaken for Aphrodite or Adonis, but you'll look and feel better. The right program of cardiovascular conditioning, strength training and nutritional guidance will halt your descent into Hades in a hand basket, and help you begin your climb toward Olympus.

Class dismissed!

Joe Stein, B.S., M.B.A., is a certified personal trainer, weight management and lifestyle consultant and owner of Renaissance Fitness & Wellness. Call 732.345.5151 or e-mail Joe@RenaissanceFitness.com with questions or to receive a complimentary fitness consultation and session.