

Calories: Burn, Baby Burn

By Joe Stein, President



True or False

You burn most of your calories when you exercise. Despite conventional wisdom, the answer is “false.” You burn between 65% and 75% of your daily caloric intake when sleeping, eating, driving the kids to school...living life. Only 15% to 20% or so of one’s daily caloric expenditure comes from exercising. Each pound of weight gain is the result of your metabolism storing 3,500 more calories than it burned.

Conversely, when you lose a pound, your metabolism has run a 3,500-calorie deficit. The best way to boost your metabolism is to increase your muscle mass. Strength training—pumping iron will do this for you.

More Muscles Burn More Calories

According to the March 2003 *Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter*, muscle mass decreases about one percent per year after age 45 or so. This is why weight gain creeps up on us slowly, not on our radar screens until it’s too late. Each pound of muscle burns between 30 and 50 calories per day...whether you exercise or not. Fifty calories a day is less than half a Snickers bar. So what? Just gaining one extra pound of muscle will cause you to lose over 5 pounds per year---that equates to losing 25 pounds in 5 years. During a twelve-week strength training program, it is not unusual to gain a pound or two of muscle and lose four pounds of fat. Losing two to three inches around the waist is not unusual either. Since extra weight creeps up on us a little at a time, losing it slowly is the proven way to keep it off---for good. By the way, ladies, you will not “bulk up.” Your muscle mass will be lean and smooth.

Additional Benefits

Research indicates there are other good reasons to increase your muscle mass:

- Improves posture
- Increases balance and mobility
- Improves functional fitness
- Attenuates osteoporosis
- Helps prevent falls
- Stimulates bone growth

What Works Best

The key to growing muscle is to lift weights heavy enough to be very difficult on the last few repetitions while maintaining proper form. Slow, steady and progressive increases in the amount of weight and the number of repetitions are important factors in reaching your goals. Once you’re able to successfully lift the same weight for several consecutive workout sessions, it’s time to increase the intensity to make lifting difficult again. This is how muscles grow and get stronger.

Time to Burn

“I don’t have time to exercise” is the reason most cited for not beginning or sticking with an exercise program. There is no need to spend hours and hours at the gym. With proper coaching, a complete fitness session can be completed in an hour. Time is muscle, and muscle burns calories. There’s a lot of misinformation about fitness out there, so don’t go it alone. A certified personal trainer can help set your goals, develop a safe training program, determine the exercises and the amount of weight you should lift, chart your progress, and tell you when it’s time to advance to the next level. We will help you learn it, so your muscles can help you burn it.

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