



## **Is This Exercise** *By Joe Stein, President*



The muscle developed by strength training stokes the fires of your metabolism. A fired-up metabolism helps maintain a healthy body weight. Largely dependent on your muscle mass, the calories burned during the day are part of your resting metabolic requirement. You can also burn calories directly by exercising. Depending on your training regimen and level of fitness, exercise may consume 15% to 20% of your daily calorie expenditure.

Many people tell me they've been "exercising a lot": planting shrubs, cleaning out the garage, vacuuming, carrying grocery bags, shopping in the mall, etc. Folks, I hate to break it to you, but the activities cited above are not examples of exercise. They are voluntary activities. Unlike involuntary activities associated with your basic metabolic rate, such as breathing, digestion and perspiring, you make a conscious choice to expend the energy to walk, shop, clean, etc. And yes, these activities do burn calories, but no, they do not qualify as exercise. For an activity to be considered exercise, it must possess all of the following characteristics:

### **Progression**

After a while, walking the same distance at the same speed and lifting the same weight again and again will stop providing fitness benefits. Over time, the resistance (weight) must gradually increase to provide a benefit.

### **Regularity**

Exercise must be done regularly. Strength training needs to be performed at least twice a week to be effective. Cardiovascular fitness needs to be done at least three times a week to provide training benefits.

### **Overload**

Muscular strength and cardiovascular fitness result when the load the body must bear increases, such as in weight training and engaging in cardio exercise. Our bodies possess the wonderful ability to constantly adapt to new and increased demands placed upon it.

### **Variety**

The body's ability to adapt is a double-edged sword. It helps us get stronger but if the stimulus remains the same, then muscle growth and strength gains will slow and eventually cease. An effective program of exercise is designed to shock your body so that it will be constantly challenged.

**Recovery**

When muscles work hard enough to handle the overload placed upon them to increase strength and size, micro-tears appear in the fibers. This is good, completely normal, a part of the strength building and muscle growing process. During periods of rest, the fibers are repaired and made stronger.

**Balance**

One goal of exercise is the symmetrical, balanced and proportional development of all major muscle groups. When you vacuum you usually use one arm. Walking up a staircase is usually done one step at a time. Mowing the lawn involves many muscles that push in a forward movement with little or no pulling backward or side-to-side actions.

**Specificity**

Having specific, measurable goals is important to any fitness program. Lifting heavier weights, walking at a faster pace, or achieving greater flexibility are examples of goals that can be quantified.

The most important thing to know about exercise is that it can work for you. A professionally designed program will embody all of the characteristics detailed above. You can still mow the lawn, rake leaves and clean your carpets, but with an exercise program under your belt, you'll look buff doing the chores.

---

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](mailto:Joe@RenaissanceFitness.com) with questions or to receive a complimentary fitness consultation and session.