

10 Exercise Myths

Although some old fitness fictions, such as “no pain, no gain” and “spot reducing” are fading fast, plenty of popular exercise misconceptions still exist. Here are some of the most common myths as well as not-so-common facts based on current exercise research.

1 You Will Burn More Fat If You Exercise Longer at a Lower Intensity. The most important focus in exercise and fat weight control is not the percentage of exercise energy coming from fat but the total energy cost, or how many calories are burned during the activity. The faster you walk, step or run, for example, the more calories you use *per minute*. However, high-intensity exercise is difficult to sustain if you are just beginning or returning to exercise, so you may not exercise very long at this level. It is safer, and more practical, to start out at a lower intensity and work your way up gradually.

2 If You're Not Going to Work Out Hard and Often, Exercise Is a Waste of Time. This kind of thinking keeps a lot of people from maintaining or even starting an exercise program. Research continues to show that *any* exercise is better than none. For example, regular walking or gardening for as little as an hour a week has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease.

3 Yoga Is a Completely Gentle and Safe Exercise. Yoga is an excellent form of exercise, but some styles are quite rigorous and demanding both physically and mentally. As with any form of exercise, qualified, careful instruction is necessary for a safe, effective workout.

4 If You Exercise Long and Hard Enough, You Will Always Get the Results You Want. In reality, genetics plays an important role in how people respond to exercise. Studies have shown a wide variation in how different exercisers respond to the same training program. Your development of strength, speed and endurance may be very different from that of other people you know.

5 Exercise Is One Sure Way to Lose All the Weight You Desire. As with all responses to exercise, weight gain or loss is impacted by many factors, including dietary intake and genetics. All individuals will not lose the same amount of weight on the same exercise program. It is possible to be active and overweight. However, although exercise alone cannot guarantee your ideal weight, regular physical activity is one of the most important factors for successful long-term weight management.

6 If You Want to Lose Weight, Stay Away From Strength Training Because You Will Bulk Up. Most exercise experts believe that cardiovascular exercise and strength training are both valuable for maintaining a healthy weight. Strength training helps maintain muscle mass and decrease body fat percentage.

7 Water Fitness Programs Are Primarily for Older People or Exercisers With Injuries. Recent research has shown that water fitness programs can be highly challenging and effective for both improving fitness and losing weight. Even top athletes integrate water fitness workouts into their training programs.

8 The Health and Fitness Benefits of Mind-Body Exercise Like Tai Chi and Yoga Are Questionable. In fact, research showing the benefits of these exercises continues to grow. Tai chi, for example, has been shown to help treat low-back pain and fibromyalgia. Improved flexibility, balance, coordination, posture, strength and stress management are just some of the potential results of mind-body exercise.

9 Overweight People Are Unlikely to Benefit Much From Exercise. Studies show that obese people who participate in regular exercise programs have a lower risk of all-cause mortality than sedentary individuals, regardless of weight. Both men and women of all sizes and fitness levels can improve their health with modest increases in activity.

10 Home Workouts Are Fine, But Going to a Gym Is the Best Way to Get Fit. Research has shown that some people find it easier to stick to a home-based fitness program. In spite of all the hype on trendy exercise programs and facilities, the “best” program for you is the one you will participate in consistently.

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