

FITNESS MYTH



Before you begin your next shape up program consider this: Strength and fitness programs should be based on sound scientific evidence. Unfortunately, many people fall prey to the latest fitness "craze" in an effort to maintain a healthy lifestyle. "Sticking to the basics more times than not give you the best results," says Stacy Berman, a former Master Trainer at New York Sports Club and the Founder of Stacy's Boot Camp, a back-to-basis style boot camp held in the parks of New York City.

Stacy's approach to fitness is that "life begins where your boundaries end." With that in mind, Stacy warns that there are no shortcuts on the journey to the perfect physique: you have to earn it through hard work and commitment! Stacy has compiled a list of her favorite fitness myths, and although it seems a new myth pops up almost every day, Stacy advises her clients to pay attention to the message a new fad is putting out, "if it sounds too good to be true, it DEFINITELY is!" says Stacy.

Fitness Myth #1: A 20 Minute Walk Will Change Your Body Shape

One common misconception is that walking 20 minutes a day 5 to 6 days a week is all you need to do to "be in shape." This is definitely true if you want to lead a longer, healthier life. Your heart, lungs, muscles, and joints will be healthier. You, however, will not lose large amounts of weight, tone muscles, and make them look "better." In order to change your body shape, a much more intensive plan will have to be instituted. This plan should incorporate dietary changes, weight lifting, and more intense cardiovascular training. All of these activities will be needed to make substantive changes in body composition.

Fitness Myth #2: Weightlifting Raises Resting Metabolism

Another common misconception is that if you lift weights and add muscle mass you will lose weight when sitting due to a higher metabolism. Scientific studies of muscle metabolism have conclusively shown that skeletal muscle burns about 13 calories per kilogram of body weight over a 24 hour period. If a man weighs 70 Kg (154 Lbs), has about 28 Kg of skeletal muscle will burn about 22% of the calories his body uses through the day. Adding 4 pounds of muscle bulk thru weightlifting, during a high intensity 6 month lifting program, would result in burning 24 more calories per day. One bite of an Oreo cookie contains about 24 calories.

This does not mean that weight training should be avoided. Weight training will result in higher lean body mass. This translates into more efficient fat metabolism for energy. Cellular membranes are more permeable to glucose, reducing the need for excess insulin in the blood.

Fitness Myth #3: Specific Exercises Will Cause Spot Reduction

Many exercise devices are marketed to spot reduce or spot tone a specific body part. The idea is that by using their device you will be able to tone the inner thighs, for example. This is simply not true. Muscles utilize blood glucose, cellular energy stores, and blood fat for energy. Fat is not pulled from the area it is stored in to serve as energy in its own "neighborhood." Once blood glucose levels are low, a hormonal reaction is triggered to metabolize stored fat for conversion to glucose for energy. Fat deposits are tapped in multiple places around the body, not adjacent to the body part requiring the need for energy. The amount of toning is based on one's genetic predisposition for muscle growth and fat storage. We can not change how our body is programmed to add muscle and store fat.

Fitness Myth #4: Lifting Heavy Weight Will Add Bulk

Adults, both male and female, may or may not become "bulky" when lifting heavy weight. Conversely, women are often told to lift light weights with high repetitions to avoid "bulk." These both are determined by our genetics, not our lifting routine. Women are less likely than men to add tremendous bulk when lifting weights. High levels of specific hormones are necessary for muscles to add large amounts of bulk. The genetics of each individual determine who can add bulk and who can not. An extension of this is that "muscle bulk" will make you heavier, slower and lose quickness. All of these have been proven scientifically untrue.

Fitness Myth #5: Prepackaged, Processed "Diet" Foods Are Best for Weight Loss

Weight loss is only accomplished when you burn more calories than you consume. That is, you have to exercise more to accommodate for the typical American high fat, fast food based diet. Caloric restriction should not be the "diet" of choice. A proper diet be composed of a balance of fruits and vegetables, whole grain derived foods, limited fat consumption, limited sugar consumption, and limited alcohol consumption. A well balanced diet will help to keep cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar low.

Foods should be freshly prepared; prepackaged foods tend to have been leached of essential vitamins and minerals. Avoid fried foods, high fat foods (cheaper cuts of red meats, processed sausages, and fast food hamburgers). A general rule of thumb is that the cheaper the meat, the higher the fat content. Fat is cheap, that's why a fast food hamburger can be sold at such a low cost.

**About Stacy Berman**

Stacy Berman is a certified fitness trainer and founder of Stacy's Boot Camp. Berman initially began her career as a lifeguard, and then moved on to one-on-one fitness training. Berman became a trainer at the New York Sports Club in 1999 and in 2002 was named their top female trainer. Berman was named master trainer in 2003 and in 2005 left NYSC to devote herself to Stacy's Boot Camp full-time.

Berman graduated from Hunter College with a degree in health education and psychology and her personal training certifications through the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) and the American Council on Exercise (ACE). She is also a certified nutritional specialist through Dr. Jane Pentz, of Lifestyle Management Associates and is a NASM certified sports fitness specialist.