



nawaz modi singhania

perfect fit

ARE you a hapless victim of your physical state? Have you been huffing and puffing away endlessly on that old stationary cycle for hours on end with little or no result? Have you been doing an obscene number of stomach crunches everyday only to see your waistline expanding? Have you been starving yourself to the point of dizzy spells and intense weakness to note no fat loss? When embarking on a fitness programme, these are some of the most common mistakes people tend to make which end up being counterproductive!

Here are some tips that will help you work smarter, not harder!

□ If your main goal is fat and inch loss, exercise cardiovascularly for at least 35-40 minutes to begin with. Activities such as walking, aerobics, swimming, jogging, rope jumping, stair climbing, hiking or even a racket game are all considered cardiovascular. The thing to remember here is that the body is so designed, that during the first 20 minutes of your workout, it does not use fat for fuel. It's only thereafter, that fats are utilised.

□ If fat loss is the goal, make sure your workout is continuous. If you get too fagged out, then slow down to an on-the-spot march, but don't stop. When you stop and start, firstly, the body doesn't continue burning fat. Instead, it dips into other energy stores like glycogen or quick energy. Secondly, this can easily lead to injuries such as a pulled muscle, Achilles tendinitis or a knee injury, among others.

□ Make sure that for fat loss you're working in what is referred to as a target heart rate zone. In other words, make sure that you are work-

ing out at a moderate level of intensity. If your intensity is too low, you're not burning fat.

The same applies if you're working out too hard; in that case you might be utilising phosphagen systems, burning quick energy or glycogen, all of which are great on the health and fitness front, but do zip for all that fat! There are various methods by which this can be done. Some of them are the Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale, the Talk Test, The VO2 Max and the Karvonen formula. Speak to a fitness professional to find out more about these, and to figure out which is best for you.

□ One of the most common errors people make is that when they have a problem area, such as the stomach or hips and thighs, they tend to spot work it to death! Bad mistake! The misconception here is that people imagine that spot work is spot reduction. It is not. When you work a particular area, you can work on muscle tone and even reshaping the group, but you cannot reduce the surface area of it. The area tends to bulk up as you're working on developing it, and makes it appear larger and more apparent. Instead, make sure that you spot work the area only moderately, and combine this with any aerobic activity as described above, so that you burn fat off from these areas instead. It's also a good idea, to then work other body parts such as the upper body and calves, so that the development of these areas make you seem more proportionate in relation to your problem areas.

□ Remember that no matter how hard and how often you workout, what you're doing on the fat loss front, is burning off and utilising a lot in terms of fat calories. This is going to go straight down the garbage chute, if you're going to go back home and three times a day or more, pack it all back in! This does not by a long shot mean that you should starve or be on a stringent diet. It's not the quantity of food you consume that requires focus, as much as the quality. It's so utterly pointless and frustrating getting into a vicious cycle of burning and bingeing. I'd strongly suggest you stop kidding yourself and embark on a fat loss programme only once you've truly decided to commit to it. Don't bother fooling yourself, wasting your time, effort and money before this.

□ The most effective and awesome workout can be just that only for a limited time period! The body very quickly adjusts to the demands and pressures of a routine, and gets immune to the same, thereafter producing no result after the initial spate of results. In order to see continuous results, it's important that one



Using a body bar to develop back strength

varies their routines, taking on different activities constantly. This is known as cross training. Cross training can include all sorts of cardio, strength and flexibility training such as weight training, jogging, walking, playing a racket game, skiing, swimming, stair climbing, rope jumping, etc. In a class setting, this could mean resistance training using weights, tubes or elastic bands, boxing, dance moves, step workouts, stretching, slide training, trampoline workouts, circuit training, etc. But keep yourself challenged differently all the while for not just your physical but also your mental well being. Sticking with the same routine day after day and time after time can get very boring and monotonous, which then leads to the inevitable, ie your dropping the whole programme in toto.

□ Fad and crash diets seriously jeopardise our health, and they just do not work. Here's how.

Crash diets (below 500 calories per day) cause a loss of potassium and nitrogen in the body. This loss triggers a mechanism in the body that causes us to hold on to our fat stores, and to turn to muscle protein for energy instead.

Scientists have speculated that within each of us is a unique "set-point mechanism" that regulates the amount of fat we carry. This is a survival mechanism of our species. It's a way of stocking up for emergencies, starvation and famine. If the body perceives that it is starving, as it does when we crash diet or fast, the set-point kicks into action, causing the body to keep a tenacious grip on its fat stores. In a bid to get out of this situation and to replenish itself, the body will first cause you to crave food — most commonly foods that are fuel-dense, high-calorie sugars and fats.

If you stand your ground and resist these cravings, the body's next line of defense will be to react by slowing down the mechanism in order to conserve calories. In the face of such a food deprivation crisis,

the body holds onto its fat for dear life!

For instance, let's imagine your body burns 1,500 calories per day. When on a crash diet, the body perceiving a threat to its very existence, will cause you to crave food. If you successfully make it through that checkpoint, the body will resort next to lowering its metabolism, let's say to 1,300 calories per day to conserve energy. It's a bit like driving your car in the first gear, and thereby burning a lot more fuel, or driving it in the fourth gear and burning a whole lot less. The distance covered though (the work done) is just the same.

As time goes by, when you stubbornly hold on to your diet regime, the body feels the need to source out other fuel stores. Desperate times, desperate measures!

So another trick is to start dipping into your body's muscle stores, and deplete them for energy. So, you lose muscle!

After a while, you finally come to the realisation that this is just not working out the way you wanted. You're not looking or feeling good, and your fat stores are largely intact!

So, disheartened, you return to your normal eating patterns. Or possibly, even worse. Having been deprived of food for so long, it's not unnatural to start bingeing. Body weight now quickly increases in the form of fat, and not the muscle that has been depleted.

Also, your metabolism will not rise again to 1,500 calories as in your pre-diet days, but will remain at 1,300 calories per day. This gives you a surplus of 200 calories per day, which will be stored as body fat.

Some of the most common fat collection sites for women are the lower belly, hips, inner and outer thighs, and triceps (back of the upper arms). For men, fat tends to stay focussed around the middle and on the back. So now, these are the areas where this excess fat will build up (or further build up, as the case may be).

Having gained fat and inches in

this way, after a certain period of time, one would typically get back onto another crash diet with renewed vigour and commit.

At this stage:

□ Your metabolic rate will take another dive, e.g. from 1,300 to 1,100 calories.

□ Your body will start dipping into the remainder of your muscle stores for energy again.

□ Your fat stores remain mostly intact.

□ Due to increased lipoprotein lipase activity (in layman's language, the result here is that the body becomes more efficient at storing fat, which is triggered by crash dieting), we set the stage for gaining fat a lot faster when we come off the diet. Due to this we get caught up in perpetual dieting.

When you get off your diet:

□ Your metabolic rate will remain at 1,100 calories per day, leaving you with a surplus of 200 calories, in addition to the 200 from the previous attempt.

□ Weight gained will be in the form of fat, and not the muscle that has been lost.

□ ...And the cycle perpetuates itself...

□ In conclusion, every time you crash diet, you lose more and more muscle, drop your metabolic rate lower and lower, and end up gaining more and more fat!

Not only this, but we receive inadequate nutrients in imbalanced combinations.

The entire body is taxed. Studies show that Yo-Yo Dieting leads to an increased risk of diabetes, heart disease and hypertension. So if crash dieting doesn't work, then what exactly does? You already know the answer! Exercise, in combination with a sensible diet.

For aerobic cross-training classes and gym training, contact the author's Fitness Centre, Body Art, on 380-5929/380-2602

nawaz@mid-day.com



New body format, where one works out cardiovascularly with weights