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perfect fit

The usual suspects

Do away with these standard myths and false notions about exercise



You must try to consume more protein if you are trying to build on muscle mass

THE amount of misconceptions floating around with regard to exercise and fitness amongst the general public is unfortunately, on the rise. This is especially surprising, considering people today are more health conscious than ever before.

Over the past nine years as a fitness professional I have often come across the following false notions, and would like to share and clarify some of them with you.

Chances are that you yourself would have fallen prey to parts of what you are about to read below. Here's hoping to set the record straight once and for all.

If I'm exercising for fat loss, once I discontinue I'll end up putting on double the fat I initially had on me!

● Often when a person embarks on an exercise programme, it's to achieve a short-term goal. For instance, we have people sailing in who'll say something like, "I'm getting married in December and need to lose 12 kgs in the next four months." They make sure that they do whatever it takes to achieve this, basically by combining an exercise programme with a sensible diet. During this time they naturally lose weight and inches, and tone up as well. The problem begins thereafter. Upon having finally achieved their goals, they then quit working out and begin binging. If you stop working out but maintain a sensible diet, you'll just stop losing more fat, your inches will remain the same, while your weight on

the scales may actually fall. This is because you'll lose some muscle mass when you discontinue exercise, and as muscle is heavier and denser (but more compact) than flab, weight typically drops. This is IF your dietary intake remains reasonable. If not, then yes, it's definitely easy to put on a lot of fat.

I should work on my trouble areas hardest (eg abs, hips and thighs). In other words, muscle toning or spot work will get the bulk off my trouble areas.

● Do yourself a favour and work less hard on your trouble areas. Excessive toning up will only make these areas look larger and more apparent.

Spot reduction is a myth. It just doesn't exist. Spot work will tone an area, but cannot substantially reduce the bulk of it. For example if you have a tummy roll, and you're religiously doing 100 sit-ups every day, in the hope that the roll will do a disappearing act, this is not going to happen. You will tone up those muscles for sure, but the roll will still remain. The problem is the underlying fat. That's what you really want to get rid of. This can be done only by engaging in cardiovascular activities, which could include aerobics, walking, jogging, swimming, cycling, rope skipping, etc.

Weight training/ resistance training will make me look bulky and masculine.

This one of course, is a feminine concern, and is not true.

Women lack the male hor-

more testosterone, which is responsible for muscle building. No matter how hard a woman works, she can't bulk up because of this. Women will develop long, sleek, slender muscles, not large, bulky ones. Within limits, weight training/resistance training adds to feminine grace and appeal. It also plays a crucial part in long-term weight management, as muscle consumes more calories both at work and at rest. In order to look like something on the cover of *Muscle and Fitness*, one would have to be taking steroids and supplements!

The harder I work out, the more fat I'll lose.

In a word, nope! When the goal is fat loss, one needs to remain within what is called a Target Heart Range, or in layman's language, a fat burning zone. There are various methods of checking on how hard you exercise, like checking the pulse, and ensuring that you stay within a certain bracket. This ideally should end up being a moderately difficult zone. Below this level, little is achieved, and the exerciser needs to work harder. Above this range, the exerciser will not use fat for fuel. Instead, the body may dip into other energy sources such as quick energy or glycogen. In this event, in order to burn fat, it's important to slow down a bit and remain in the moderately intense bracket.

The more I sweat, the more fat I'll lose.

The truth here is the more you sweat, the more water you lose. This means that you'll be able to burn *less* fat.

As sweating and fat loss often go hand in hand, they are commonly confused as being one and the same thing. As the body loses more and more water through sweat, you'll lose the ability to continue burning fat as the body begins to overheat, and your ability to get rid of the heat built up during exercise reduces. Like an overheated car, you can't run, and you'll just pack up!

The bottom-line here is, the more you sweat, the more water you need to drink to replace it, in order to be able to continue burning fat.

High impact means high intensity.

● While this is partly true, high impact does not always mean high intensity. The same holds true in reverse, in other words low impact doesn't necessarily mean low intensity.

'Impact' is the pressure and the constant pounding the lower limbs are put through due to the participant jumping or hopping off the ground with both feet at the same time. This greatly increases the risk of injury to the lower limbs, particularly to the knees, shins and ankles, as they bear the brunt of impact-based activities. One would imagine that this impact would be the person's body weight. This is not so. Research shows that this typically ends up being 5-6 times a person's body weight! In other words, with every single time you jump or hop off the floor, the lower limbs bear 5-6 times your own body weight! Safety regulations are definitely violated here. It's a bad idea!

'Intensity' on the other hand, means how hard you work.

What we ideally want to do is reduce the impact on the lower

limbs, but keep the intensity up. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, like keeping the arms and leg work larger, going through or bending the knees more, using light wrist weights, incorporating travelling moves, etc. High impact does have its virtues as well, but must be used prudently in combination with low impact, and only by fitter individuals.

Aerobics ruins the joints.

Any exercise done incorrectly or carelessly, without proper attention placed on form and technique, and without adequate supervision and instruction can lead to injury. Assuming that this angle is taken care of, aerobics actually strengthens the joints. The ligaments, tendons and muscles in and around joints are strengthened and reinforced through exercise.

I can't exercise since I have a bad back.

Exercise can reverse and eliminate a back problem. Strengthening exercises and stretches work in combination to achieve this. Modifications would have to be made to a regular workout to ensure safety and effectiveness.

I can't exercise as I have arthritis.

Exercise is actually recommended to arthritics. Flexibility and an increased range of motion about a joint are important benefits of exercise to the arthritic. So is increased muscle tone and strength. Again, modifications would have to be made to ensure safety and effective-

ness.

Exercise is for the young. At my age I can't go prancing about the place!

So long as you have a physical existence, you need physical exercise!

As we get older, physical ailments become more prevalent, recovery is slower and less adequate. This is when our bodies need exercise more than before, when we were younger and could take our bodies for granted.

It's best to exercise in the morning.

● There is no better or worse time of the day to exercise. Whatever works for you, is best.

You must consume more protein if you're trying to build on muscle mass.

Most of us consume 2-3 times more protein than our body requires anyway. Remember that excess protein can damage the kidneys, and deprive your body of calcium. Even intense training won't deplete most people's protein supply.

I can't exercise since I suffer from asthma/ bronchitis.

One of the benefits of cardiovascular activities is increased lung efficiency. Respiratory disorders can be reduced, and often eliminated through exercise.

Exercise turns fat into muscle.

Fat is fat, while muscle is muscle, and one type of tissue cannot turn into the other. When exercising, fat stores reduce and muscle tone increases, but fat does not 'turn into' muscle!

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