



Fitness Facts

Dispelling Common Exercise Myths

(NAPSA)—Will doing 100 leg lifts a day give you thinner thighs? Does muscle turn to fat when you stop exercising? With all the information available about fitness and exercise, it can be hard to separate fact from fiction. While some exercise myths are falling by the wayside, others still exist. Without proper knowledge, you may hinder your exercise progress.

Myth: Spot reducing. One of the most common exercise myths is that you can reduce fat from specific parts of your body, such as your thighs or abdomen. The truth is fat cannot be burned from specific body parts. Fat is stored throughout the body, and exercise will use fat from different areas and not necessarily the part you are working. The best way to reduce body fat is with a consistent routine of cardiovascular exercise, strength training and stretching.

Myth: “No pain, no gain.” A second exercise fallacy is that you must exercise at a very high intensity or for long hours to get results. Research shows, however, that even low to moderate intensity routines have valuable health benefits. A good general recommendation is to do cardiovascular exercise three to five days a week for 20 to 45 minutes per session at 65 to 80 percent of your maximum heart rate (220 minus your age), which is a level where you are working but aren't gasping for air.

To help you stay in the right range, many fitness equipment manufacturers offer cardiovascu-



lar machines with digital heart rate sensors. For example, Life Fitness treadmills, total-body elliptical Cross-Trainers, Lifecycle exercise bikes and stairclimbers have Lifepulse hand sensors and interactive heart rate Zone Training+ workouts that automatically adjust the resistance level based on your target heart rate.

Myth: Strength training will make you very muscular. A common misconception among women is that lifting weights will make them bulk up. Bodybuilders usually have spent hours at the gym, may use steroids and follow strict diets to achieve their physiques. In addition, compared to men, women have less of the hormone testosterone, which is key to developing large muscles.

Strength training approximately two to four times a week, doing a variety of exercises for the major muscle groups, will help lead to a lean and toned appearance.

Myth: If you stop working out, muscle will turn into fat. Many people believe that if they stop working out, their muscle will turn into fat. Muscle and fat are two distinct tissues, however, and never can be converted from one to the other. If you stop exercising, muscle tissue will shrink, so you may feel flabbier. Also, when muscles get smaller, they do not need as many calories, so your metabolism slows. With a slower metabolism, if you eat the same amount of calories, you may gain body fat.

Myth: If you didn't exercise when you were younger, it's too late. Some older people tend to think that it is too late to start an exercise routine if they didn't work out when they were younger. Studies have shown that it is never too late to start working out—you can reap benefits at any age. As we age, exercise can help reduce the risk of bone and muscle diseases and help enhance daily functionality. Regardless of age and medical history, consult a doctor before starting any exercise program.

A terrific resource for guidance on proper exercise is Life Fitness' *Smart Exercise Guide*, available to download for free at www.life-fitness.com/hom_edu_main.asp.

Once you dispel some common exercise myths, you can start to exercise smart and develop a fitter, healthier you.