

The fat-loss method

Written by Brianna Larson
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For individuals attempting to achieve fat loss, the intensity of weight training can be a double edged sword.

When beginning an exercise program, muscle mass increases may out pace fat losses, resulting in a small initial weight gain. Significant fat loss requires a certain intensity, duration, and frequency that novice exercisers may not be able to achieve until they develop greater confidence, understanding, and tolerance to exercise. If an aerobic exercise and nutrition program is sufficient enough to lose fat, a moderate repetition range with a progressively heavier weight will accelerate fat loss with a toning effect. If a muscle group ever outpaces fat loss, the slight bulking effect is only temporary.

The following are guidelines from the American College of Sports Medicine's position stand "Recommendations on Quantity and Quality of Exercise."

Cardiorespiratory Exercise

- Adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week.
- One continuous session and multiple shorter sessions (of at least 10 minutes) are both acceptable to accumulate desired amount of daily exercise.
- Gradual progression of exercise time, frequency and intensity is recommended for best adherence and least injury risk.
- People unable to meet these minimums can still benefit from some activity.

Resistance Exercise

- Light intensity is best for older persons or previously sedentary adults starting exercise.
- Two to four sets of each exercise will help adults improve strength and power.

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- For each exercise, 8-12 repetitions improve strength and power, 10-15 repetitions improve strength in middle-age and older persons starting exercise, and 15-20 repetitions improve muscular endurance.

- Adults should train each major muscle group two or three days each week using a variety of exercises and equipment.

- n Adults should wait at least 48 hours between resistance training sessions.

You may think your fat is turning to muscle right? Unfortunately, this is another misconception that I will clear up. Muscles and fat are made up of very different types of cells that have completely different functions. Skeletal muscles get larger when a person exercises primarily from hypertrophy; in other words, the person isn't gaining more muscle cells (which would be hyperplasia), rather, the ones they have are just getting bigger, with more filaments being developed within the cells to accommodate the more challenging demand on them through strength training.

So, understanding that principle, what happens when an active person stops exercising? After a person quits exercising, the muscle cells will not somehow manage to morph into fat cells; rather, they are simply shrinking, also known as atrophy. This allows the body to conserve energy when a person's daily activities don't require as much muscle mass. I bet you did not realize that muscle cells require a significant amount of energy to maintain (resting caloric usage of 13 calories per kilogram per day).

Here is an example to better clarify my point, people who exercise regularly tend to accustom themselves to eating quite a bit more food than people who maintain a relatively healthy body weight without exercising. Once they stop exercising though, they instantly lose the need for the calories used during their workouts, which is often quite significant. Over time, as their body loses muscle mass, and ages, their body needs significantly fewer calories even when they aren't working out. As noted before, resting skeletal muscle cells burn approximately 13 calories per kilogram per day or around 6 calories per pound per day. So that person will even see quite a difference there while they're just sitting around doing nothing. So bottom line, people who exercise regularly and suddenly stop, tend to gain fat quickly, because they don't adjust their food intake to compensate for their decreased caloric needs, not because muscle cells are somehow turning into fat cells.

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The ideal program for fat loss would include the combination of proper diet, weight training, and cardio exercise.

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