

Why Weight Training Helps You Burn Fat and Lose Weight

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Adding weight training to a cardiovascular routine practically guarantees slimming results. Here's why:



First, it speeds up your metabolism of fat. By this, I indirectly mean that your body becomes more efficient at burning calories. Picture two cars in a race. Car A is small in frame, but it has a huge engine. Car B is very large and heavy and has a very small engine. Which one do you think will go ten miles in the shortest amount of time? Your muscle mass is your engine, and the larger it is in proportion to your frame, the more efficient a machine you become.

When you build muscle mass, your muscles actually gobble up calories from your food in order to maintain themselves. This leaves fewer excess calories lying around, turning into fat. In fact, if you lower your calorie intake just a little bit, your new muscle mass will eat up some of your body fat. There's a delicate balance that you need to strike here, though, because if you cut your caloric intake too dramatically, your muscles will shrink and your body might feel threatened by starvation and begin to store extra fat, as a precaution.

Weight training increases your heart rate. Yes, it is basically an anaerobic exercise, not designed for fat-burning the way cardiovascular exercises are, but between sets, your heart rate remains up, and you actually are getting a bit of the aerobic effect throughout your circuit.

The best way to take advantage of this is to use a light to medium amount of weight and do a lot of repetitions (for example, three sets of fifteen). You should feel your muscles burning, though, and the last three or four reps should be difficult to do. If you breeze through it, you may get the aerobic effect, but you won't increase your muscle mass sufficiently. If you warm up and cool down, you'll have an increased heart rate for an entire hour or longer.

If you're not comfortable with dumbbells or machines with heavy weight plates, **resistance tubing and bands** are very effective for toning and increasing strength. If you can find a machine or method that motivates you, you're much more likely to stick with your workout routine.

People who lift weights generally sleep more restfully than people who don't. A correlation has been shown between insomnia and weight gain, with

many possible explanations. The most logical is probably that the body repairs and restores itself during restful periods. When it is deprived of these sojourns, its fat-metabolizing mechanisms must work in a less-than-optimal state. Well-rested organs are better equipped to take care of business. If you don't sleep well, the best way to change that is to begin weight training.

Building strength makes it possible for a person to increase physical ability. This is why athletes spend so much time in the gym. If a tennis player trained by simply doing drills and playing the game, she might improve her agility, but she wouldn't add much oomph to her serve without strengthening her shoulders, arms, legs and torso muscles. With that extra muscle power, she can hit the ball harder and play more explosively, ultimately burning more calories while she plays. She is also less likely to sustain an injury which would put her on the sofa for two weeks. See the connection?

Women are often hesitant about weight training, especially when their goal is to lose weight. "Why add bulk to bulk?" they wonder. Contrary to what many assume, a heavy woman will not become bigger if she lifts weights. As a matter of fact, as the muscles become denser, containing less marbled fat, she appears smaller.

Women also do not become masculine-looking when they build muscle mass. If anything, they develop a more symmetrical, feminine shape. Women don't have the hormonal make-up that men have and therefore aren't able to build as much muscle mass. Only with steroids and fanatically intense training can a woman develop a manly body.

When you begin weight training, stay off the scale for a while, but get out the tape measure. Measure your waist and hips every two weeks and keep a log. Your weight may stay the same for a month or two (or longer), but you will almost certainly lose some girth within that time frame. And isn't that what you really want?

While you're at it, you may want to get out the J Crew catalogs, because you'll need some new clothes soon!