

Looking For a Sure Fire Way to Rev Up Your Metabolism?

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If you're a boomer, you've probably noticed that suddenly you're lugging around a few extra pounds despite your stepped up efforts to resist scrumptious desserts and go to the gym. Reaching mid-life and dreading the read-out on the bathroom scale go hand in hand. Now that I'm in my sixth decade, it seems that my metabolism has slowed from its childhood hummingbird pace to a sloth-worthy crawl. **When I think of all the junk food calories I was able to scarf down in my youth while maintaining a healthy weight, I momentarily long to be 20 years-old again.**



If you're like me, your first reaction was denial. You racked your brain, thinking that maybe you'd started a new medication that was responsible for the weight gain. No such luck. Maybe you even visited your doctor, secretly hoping you might have some treatable medical condition, like an underactive thyroid. No dice.

It's time to face reality. Unfortunately, weight gain in your boomer years is mostly likely due to the ravages of "normal aging." **Think of your body as a planned obsolescence machine. It's designed to produce offspring and then slowly wind down.** That's why kids run around all day while we're content to sit on the couch and watch spectator sports.

What accounts for the slow-down in fat burning as we age? In a word, sarcopenia. Never heard of it? Neither has Spell check. The word was invented in 1988 by Professor Irwin Rosenberg, MD, Director of Tufts University's Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging, to describe the noticeable decline in skeletal muscle mass that occurs as we age. Aging specialists like Dr. Bruno Vellas, President of the

international Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics, are predicting that “In the future, sarcopenia will be known as much as osteoporosis is now.”

What’s the relationship between shrinking muscles and excess pounds? Think of your muscles as your body’s fuel burning engine. If you downsize from a V8 to a 4-cylinder, your body will use less fuel. That’s good for cars, but bad for humans. The end result is that as you lose muscle, your body burns fewer calories and the unused fuel gets stored as fat. Before you know it, you have muffin-top and can’t fit into your jeans.

Beginning at age 30 we lose, on average, about six pounds of muscle per decade. Between the ages of 30 and 80 our muscle mass can shrink a whopping 40-50%. As muscle weakness progresses, it eventually leads to decreased mobility and an increased likelihood of becoming disabled.

So what can you do to combat sarcopenia? The cure comes from the space program, since anti-gravity produces sarcopenia-like effects in astronauts. **Resistance training, or weight lifting, works by putting a load on a muscle, creating small tears, which repair themselves and result in the muscle tissue increasing in size and strength.**



And you need not spend hours in the gym. A moderate amount of resistance training done on a regular basis will rev up your engine again. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends **twenty to thirty minutes of training two to three times per week.**



Don't try using your advanced age as an excuse not to start rebuilding muscle. **A group of wheelchair-bound 90 year-olds living in an assisted living showed remarkable improvement after performing 30 minutes of resistance training for 14 weeks.** On average, they added four pounds of lean muscle, while eliminating three pounds of fat weight. They also increased their leg strength by 80% and their upper body strength by 40%. **So get lifting!**

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