

## 11 Fitness Secrets No One Ever Told You

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### Myth #1: Exercising in Heat Burns More Calories



**Sorry summer runners, outside dripping with sweat. That heat isn't doing much for you, except making your morning jog feel like a slog.**

Proponents of Bikram yoga — a 26-pose yoga practice performed over 90 minutes in a room heated to 104 degrees — say heat helps "detoxify" the body, leading to improved health and weight loss. Other, less-specific forms of hot yoga often advertise the same.

But there's not much science to back this up, so a team of Colorado State researchers measured the progress of sedentary young adults with no yoga experience who took three Bikram classes a week for eight weeks.

In the end, participants showed some small increases in strength and muscle control, but just a slight drop in body weight, according to the study's abstract.

**A follow-up with more-experienced yogis found that Bikram burned about as many calories as walking briskly — information that might come as a huge shock to those who heard that one class can burn 1,000 calories, lead investigator Brian L. Tracy told *Time.com*. Men burned an average of 460 calories in 90 minutes while women torched 330. "I think the heat and the difficulty of the postures combine to alter your perception of the intensity of the exercise," Tracy explained to *Time*.**

## Myth #2: Leg Lifts Slim Your Thighs



**One fitness myth trainers hate to hear is the idea that working the muscle under the fat you want to lose will "spot tone" your trouble area.** Examples include leg lifts to tone your thighs, tricep extensions for a lean upper arm and the like.

**"You can't decide where the weight is going to come off first,"** professional dancer-turned-fitness guru and founder of The Refine Method Brynn Jinnett told WellandGoodNYC.

If you could burn flab wherever you work your muscle, tennis players would have super-toned dominant arms, right? Not so fast. A famous 1971 study of tennis players found that though muscle levels were different arm to arm, the left and right arms had equal levels of fat, according to a write up in *Yale Scientific Magazine*. A 2007 study in individuals completing a resistance-training program found like results.

But you can still tone the muscles in your trouble spot. So once you burn off fat through total-body, high-intensity moves, you'll have a shapely muscle ready to show off.

## Myth #3: Training for a Marathon Will Lead to Weight Loss



Many people trying to lose weight turn to running first — after all, you just need the right shoes to get started.

But after a certain point, steady-state endurance running is not the best way to slim down, contrary to popular belief. Instead, some marathoners find they gain weight while training thanks to an insatiable appetite.

**"Distance running is not the most effective way to burn calories,"** running coach David Silk, who created a program called Precision Running for Equinox Fitness, told weather.com. Instead, Silk said, balanced interval running for no more than an hour a few times a week, along with other activities, such as resistance training, is the way to go for overall fitness.

#### **Myth #4: You're Gaining Weight Because Muscle Weighs More Than Fat**

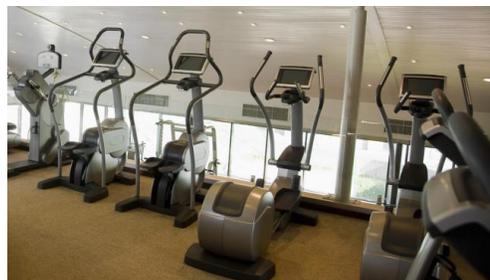


Newbie exercisers often tell themselves they're gaining weight at the gym because of newfound muscle mass. But that's likely untrue because gaining muscle mass takes a lot more work than adding fat.

**Although it is correct that muscle is denser than fat, of course, a pound of muscle does not weigh any more than a pound of fat.** What's likely showing up on the scale is an increased appetite (intentionally or not) after hitting the gym.

A balanced exercise program should leave you both burning fat and gaining muscle, which is why measuring your body fat — not just your weight — is a good way to track your progress.

#### **Myth #5: Elliptical Calorie Counts Are Spot-On**



If your post-workout nosh holds just as many calories as you think you just burned on the elliptical or stationary bike, that's a recipe for weight gain.

Cardio machines don't accurately reflect the calories you've burned. One reason is because muscle mass hugely affects your metabolism, so two 140-pound women, one with 18 percent body fat, and one with 28 percent body fat, will burn very different amounts. **Ellipticals are the worst offenders, according to a study reported by Shape. These machines overestimate your calorie burn by a shocking 42 percent.**

### **Myth #6: Exercise Without Weight Loss Doesn't Matter**



**If you have pounds to lose, or a shape to maintain, your weight might hold the focus of your fitness program. But if you're not making progress on the scale, take heart: You're still doing a great thing for your body.**

One study of obese teenage girls found that when they began exercising without dietary changes, they improved visceral fat, blood fat and insulin sensitivity — markers of heart disease and type 2 diabetes — even though they lost no weight.

Other studies have shown exercise improves brain function without weight loss, and also reduces mental health risks. Just ask anyone who has had a runner's high.

### **Myth #7: Crunches Flatten Your Belly**



"If you're doing crunches because you're really focused on making your abs flatter and tighter, instead, you should be looking at your diet," Refine Method founder Jinnett told

weather.com earlier this summer. "[Diet is what] will remove the fat that's sitting over the top of your abdomen."

**Crunches won't help build stomach muscle effectively, either.** "The core is designed to reflexively stabilize, to brace and tighten, so that your arms and legs can produce power and strength," Jinnett said. "Crunching and curling your shoulder toward your hips is a small piece of what your abs do."

Planks, twists and chops are better bets, she said, because they engage the core more fully.

### **Myth #8: The More Time You Spend at the Gym, the Better**



Gone are the days when long sessions of steady-state cardio reigned supreme. Instead, CrossFit and other forms of high-intensity interval training (even just intervals on an indoor bike) are en vogue.

**Numerous studies have found that short, intense exercise blasts more calories, and creates a more pronounced "afterburn" effect, than an hour-long slower session.** "A high-intensity workout increases the body's need for oxygen during the effort and creates an oxygen shortage, causing your body to ask for more oxygen during recovery," Eric Salvador, NASM, NSCA, head instructor at The Fitting Room in New York City, told Daily Burn. "This afterburn effect is referred to as Excess Post-Exercise Oxygen Consumption and is the reason why intense exercise will help burn more fat and calories than regular aerobic and steady-state workouts."

Plus, the added muscle mass that can come from fast-training sessions can boost your metabolism over the long-term.

### Myth #9: Heavy Weights Add Bulk; Light Weights Produce Definition



The old fitness adage goes: Light weights and high reps for toning and definition; heavy weights for mass. But you shouldn't shy away from slightly larger weights if you're trying to get lean, Joe Dowdell, CSCS, told *Shape*.

**“[Light weights aren't] necessarily wrong ... but the downside is that it only develops endurance capability of the muscle (type 1 or slow-twitch muscle fibers) and neglects type 2 or fast-twitch muscle fibers, which are important for building new muscle tissue and developing stretch and power,”** he said, noting that he uses both approaches to train his clients.

### Myth #10: Myth: Stretching Before Exercise Prevents Injury



Any good workout kicks off with a short stretching session, right? Not so fast, experts say. In 2004, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted a meta-analysis of more than 300 randomized trials or cohort studies on stretching, and found that it did not reduce exercise-induced injuries.

**You're better off warming up through light exercise, and some dynamic moves, such as walking lunges, to loosen up your body.** That said, stretching can still boost flexibility, and reduce pain and tightness, so it still has its place in your fitness routine.

## Myth #11: It's Too Late to Get Fit



Good news, life-long couch potatoes. You can still start an exercise program, and improve your overall health. Even if you slip up, and give up, you can still start again, and help prevent chronic conditions, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and Alzheimer's disease, researchers wrote in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

Investigators from the University College of London tracked 3,500 adults around retirement age for eight years. **Those who took up exercise in their 60s were three times more likely to remain healthy over the course of the study, BBC News reports.** They were also less likely to struggle with day-to-day activities, such as bathing or dressing, than individuals who remained inactive. Those who were consistently exercising before the study were also more likely to remain healthy.

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