

# Fats, Carbs, Protein – It Still Comes Down to Calories

Conventional wisdom was right – to lose weight, you need to eat fewer calories than you expend. That's the simple, straightforward approach people took 35 to 40 years ago, and it remains the one basic truth about weight loss.

However, as our national obsession with weight loss has grown over the past few decades, we've been lured down low fat, low protein and low carb paths looking for the perfect diet fix. Each trend has diverted our attention from a simple fact: most people simply eat too much.

While it is important to monitor the content of your diet, and strike a healthy balance among carbohydrates, protein and fats, it still comes down to calories. A calorie is a calorie regardless of its source, according to Jazzercise founder Judi Sheppard Missett, and it is far too easy for individuals to consume more calories than they need in today's world.

Portion sizes have ballooned as the quality of our food has plummeted. With the explosion of packaged products, we are eating more nutritionally barren foods. Chips and other processed snacks have replaced fruits, nuts and vegetables as our staples. (Ask your grandparents what they snacked on as children, and you probably won't hear them mention chocolate covered granola bars or Doritos®.)

To complicate matters, caloric needs decrease as we age, at the same time that physical activity also diminishes for many individuals. Almost imperceptibly, you begin consuming more calories than you expend and the excess begins appearing gradually on your body. Before you know it, you're carrying around an extra five to 20 pounds.

The answer to this dilemma doesn't lie in following an extreme diet, in which certain types of foods (e.g. carbohydrates, protein and fat) are severely restricted while others are allowed in unmitigated quantities.

Rather you should eat a balance of fat (20 to 30 percent), carbohydrates (55 to 60 percent) and lean protein (15 to 20 percent), trying to consume a bit of each in every snack/meal. In other words, a bit of protein with your carbohydrates will help slow digestion and leave you feeling satisfied for a longer period of time.

The real "trick" to weight loss is figuring out your personal caloric needs and creating a balanced diet and exercise program that allows you to expend more calories than you consume. To determine your true caloric needs, use the following formula:

divide your weight in pounds by 2.2

multiply that number by 21.6

then, multiply that number by 1.3 if you are sedentary (less than 30 minutes of brisk walking/day), 1.5 if you engage in light physical activity (30 minutes of brisk walking/day), 1.7 if you are active (80 minutes of aerobic dance or 40 minutes of jogging/day) and 1.9 if you are very active (90 minutes of jogging/day)

Next, learn proper portion sizes. The Federal Citizen Information Center offers a helpful brochure online at [http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic\\_text/food/food-pyramid/main.htm](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/food/food-pyramid/main.htm) which includes guidelines as to what counts as a serving.

Finally, create a diet and exercise plan that allows you to burn about 500 more calories a day than you consume. That equals a one-pound loss per week, which most experts agree is the best approach to safe and lasting weight loss. A combination of aerobic exercise and strength training is the best way to burn calories. Whether you do them on alternate days or accomplish both in one workout be sure to do both. Aerobic exercise burns fat while strengthening the heart, lungs and circulatory system. Strength training maintains and builds muscle, which increases your base metabolic rate, or the rate at which your body burns calories at rest. (Simply put, muscle burns more calories than fat.)

## Why Every Woman Should Exercise

When it comes to good health, everyone should exercise. Regular exercise is key to long-term weight loss and subsequent weight maintenance, which plays a huge role in reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and several other illnesses. For women, there are gender-specific benefits as well, including a reduced risk of breast cancer, osteoporosis and menopause symptoms.

Despite the overwhelming evidence that exercise improves the quality and length of one's life, 72 percent of women are not physically active on a daily or even near daily basis, according to data from the 2000 National Health Interview Survey. Yet, walking briskly for just 75 to 150 minutes per week is enough to lower a woman's risk of breast cancer by 18 percent, according to reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In a study by German researchers, reported in "Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise," women ages 52 to 58 who exercised four times a week for a three-year period maintained the bone mineral density (BMD) in their spines and hips. The BMD of study participants who did not exercise, meanwhile, was severely reduced.

The loss of estrogen through menopause triggers a rise in cholesterol and triglycerides, important risk factors for heart disease. The German study also found that menopausal women who exercised experienced a decrease in both.

"Participants who kept up the exercise regimen showed lasting benefits for heart and bone health, as well as increased strength and an easing of the symptoms of menopause," stated Wolfgang Kemmler, Ph.D., lead researcher for the study.

Finally, physical fitness is an even more important predictor of death for women than for men, according to separate research conducted at Chicago's Rush Heart Institute and Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions in Baltimore.

Exercise ability was so strongly correlated with the risk of death that even with desirable blood cholesterol and blood pressure a non-smoking, sedentary woman had six times the risk of dying from heart disease as a very active women with the same profile.

Unfortunately, activity levels among females begin dropping drastically during adolescence. To make matters worse, women also tend to overestimate their levels of physical activity, according to a study published in the "American Journal of Clinical Nutrition."

Jazzercise founder Judi Sheppard Missett says it's time for women to take a hard look at how their lifestyles impact their health. Even more imperative, it's time for women to be strong role models for the girls in their lives. You don't need to play a sport, join a gym, or hire a trainer to get fit. If you like to dance, just put on your favorite music and dance around your living room.

## 7 Easy Steps To A Healthier You

It's the little things that count. What's true for romance is also true for wellness, says Jazzercise founder Judi Sheppard Missett. The health is in the details, so to speak, and the small things you do each day can add up to big improvements. Following are seven easy ways you can improve your health immediately:

- **Get enough sleep.** We live in a sleep deprived culture where 25 percent of adults are exhausted on any given day. Fatigue alters mood, reaction time, concentration, even metabolism. If you want to maintain a healthy weight, look your best and remain mentally sharp all day long, get eight hours sleep per night.
- **Change your snacks.** Many people get it right at mealtime – lean meat or fish, vegetables, whole grain breads – then blow it when it comes to between meal snacks. Give your snack shelf a once over. Throw out the chips, cookies, candy, and granola bars, and replace them with nuts, dried fruits, fresh fruits, whole-wheat crackers, vegetables and low fat cheeses and yogurt.
- **Drink plenty of water.** Everyday your body must replace two-and-a-half quarts of water. If you're not drinking enough, you jeopardize all the bodily functions it assists, including the digestion and absorption of food, regulation of body temperature, blood circulation, the delivery of nutrients and oxygen to cells, and the removal of toxins and other wastes. Water also cushions joints and protects tissues and organs from shock and damage. Chronic dehydration, on the other hand, is associated with other problems such as hypertension, asthma, allergies, fatigue and migraine headaches.
- **Wear sunscreen.** Exposure to sunlight is important to combat seasonal depression and to ensure that our bodies make enough Vitamin D, but the UV rays also make it risky business. Protect your skin everyday with sunscreen, and try to avoid direct sunlight during the peak hours from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- **Get an annual physical.** There's simply no better way to catch illnesses early and to monitor your health as the years roll by.
- **Share your family history with your physician.** While you're at the doctor's office each year, be sure to provide him or her with a family health history. For example, if your mother or sister has had breast cancer, your risk is two to two-and-a-half times as great as women with no family history of the disease. Knowing this, your doctor can help you to take the appropriate preventive measures and order the appropriate screening tests. The same holds true for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity, etc.
- **Exercise.** According researchers from the Cooper Institute, a Dallas-based research organization that focuses on exercise, fitness is a stronger predictor of mortality than fatness. Their study found that women who were physically fit had a lower risk of death than did sedentary women even if their weight was above recommended levels. Certainly obesity is a risk factor that shouldn't be ignored, but regular exercise has an undeniable impact on health and can also help individuals reach and maintain a healthy weight.

# Fitness Myths Debunked

Myths are entertaining when they involve Greek gods and goddesses or tales of the Trojan War. But, myths about physical fitness can be downright dangerous.

Dozens of myths circulate the physical fitness world, and sometimes it's hard to separate fact from fiction. As you celebrate National Physical Fitness Month this May, take a look at these common fitness myths.

**Myth # 1:** Exercise turns my fat into muscle - We all dream about our fat miraculously transforming into muscle as we log hours on the treadmill. But, the truth is that muscle and fat are two entirely different types of tissues. One type simply cannot turn into the other. However, if you exercise, you will buildup muscle fibers, and fat cells will shrink as you burn more calories than you eat.

**Myth # 2:** No pain, no gain - You may think that you didn't work hard enough if you don't feel sore the next day. This is completely untrue. Sure, it's normal to have delayed onset muscle soreness when you first start a fitness program. But, other than that, muscle soreness is an indication that your exercise was too intense. Exercising too hard causes damage to your muscles, resulting in swelling and pain. So, when you have sore muscles, let them rest, and take it a little easier at the gym next time around.

**Myth # 3:** Lifting weights will make me bulk up - Most women don't have the testosterone levels needed to look like the Hulk. Besides that, you would have to spend countless hours lifting extremely heavy weights to create the professional bodybuilder look. So, don't shy away from weight training. Regular strength training will actually make you look leaner. That's because a pound of muscle takes up less space than a pound of fat.

**Myth # 4:** I can spot reduce my belly fat with crunches - There is no such thing as spot reduction, unless it involves a trip to the plastic surgeon. Crunches or any abdominal exercises will strengthen your muscles, but you cannot direct your body to lose pounds in a particular area. So, continue with exercises for your abdominal region. Then complement those workouts with cardiovascular activities to burn calories. As you burn more calories than you take in, you will shed fat, and your muscle will become more visible. Of course, genetics will decide which area of your body shrinks first.

**Myth # 5:** Exercise is more effective in the morning - The early bird may catch the worm, but workouts can be equally valuable at any time of the day. There is no solid research to support that one time of the day is more effective than another. That means the best time for you to exercise is when you will stick with it! Jazzercise Founder and CEO Judi Sheppard Missett recommends finding a time of day that works for you, then blocking off that time on your calendar.

**Myth # 6:** For noticeable results, I have to live at the gym - You may not gain Hilary Swank's Million-Dollar Baby body overnight, but you don't have to set-up camp at your local gym to see genuine results. Both the American College of Sports Medicine and the U.S. Surgeon General recommend 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. And even if you can't meet those guidelines, keep in mind that some exercise is always better than no exercise.

# Metabolism 101

Women all over the world get weak in the knees when someone mentions the “m” word. Metabolism is a universal hot topic, as countless diets and fitness regimens promise to stoke the metabolic fires and bring lifelong change. So, what exactly is your metabolism, and can you really increase it?

Simply put, your metabolism is the rate at which your body burns calories. Your personal metabolism is largely determined by genetics, and it inevitably slows down with age. Yet, there are steps you can take to rev up your metabolism and increase your body’s calorie-burning furnace.

**Lift Weights** – Muscle loss is one of the reasons metabolism slows with age. Muscle burns calories at a greater rate than fat. From age 20-70, we lose about 30 percent of our total muscle cells. Resistance training can counteract that loss. In fact, one Netherlands study determined that resting metabolism increased a whopping nine percent over a time period of 18 weeks when participants built more muscle mass.

**Eat Breakfast** – Perhaps breakfast really is the most important meal of the day. That’s because breakfast jump-starts your metabolism before you begin your daily activities. Your body will burn more calories from dawn to dusk if you stoke the metabolic fires first thing in the morning.

**Start Grazing** – The culinary routine of three square meals per day is not only passé, but also counterproductive for your metabolism. Researchers at Georgia State University show that three-meal-a-day female athletes have lower resting metabolic rates and higher body fat percentages than their counterparts who graze throughout the day. Eating small meals several times per day stabilizes your blood sugar and revs up your metabolism. If you go too long between meals, your body enters starvation mode, and it stores up excess fuel as fat.

**Get Active** – A regular exercise program is vital, but that doesn’t give you license to be a couch potato for the rest of the day. Consider that an average woman burns 2,000 calories per day. Perhaps 400 of those calories are burned in a given workout. That means the remaining 80 percent of calories are burned in daily activities. So, trade an hour of TV time for a more active hobby, and you’ll burn more calories in a given day. Jazzercise Founder and CEO Judi Sheppard Missett recommends making small changes in your lifestyle, such as taking the stairs more often or selecting a parking space farther away from your destination.

**Increase Protein** – Resting metabolism increases after a protein-rich meal because the digestion process for protein uses more calories. As an added bonus, protein makes your body feel more satiated, so you’ll be less tempted to snack. So, add more protein into your daily diet to increase your metabolic rate. But, don’t go overboard and cut out healthy carbohydrates altogether, as your body needs the nutrients found in healthy carbs.

There’s no magic bullet when it comes to increasing metabolism. Start making small lifestyle changes and see if the “m” word becomes your newest friend.

## Healthy, Active Aging

We're lucky to live in a day and age when a person 50 years old is considered by many to be young. Average life expectancy increased by decades during the 20th century, jumping from the late-forties around 1900 to the late seventies by 2000, and seniors are embracing the concept of "fearless" aging.

For Jazzercise founder Judi Sheppard Missett, fearless aging is tantamount to aging gracefully. While we can't halt the march of time, we certainly can slow its physical effects and live full and active lives well into our eighties and even nineties.

"About 70 percent of how well you age is under your control," states Thomas Perls, M.D., an associate professor of medicine at Boston University's School of Medicine. Basically, you can feel younger than your years through diet, exercise and attitude.

Unfortunately, lingering misconceptions about exercise continue to prevent some seniors from joining in, which is extremely frustrating when you consider how much it can improve their quality of life.

"A progressive exercise prescription can enhance function by 10 percent to 20 percent," states Roy Shephard, M.D. Ph. D., professor emeritus of applied physiology at the University of Toronto. "In terms of functional capacity, conditioning can reduce biological age by 10 to 20 years."

And research has shown that significant physical gains in strength and endurance can be made by individuals in their eighties and even nineties. Research also indicates that exercise can lower the risk of several chronic diseases, from type 2 diabetes to hypertension, cardiovascular disease and certain forms of cancer.

Experts contributing to a 1998 position issued by the American College of Sports Medicine all agreed that exercise was the key to maintaining quality of life, as well as extending life expectancy. On the flip side, inactivity can lead to premature mortality.

So, regardless of your current age, it's time to get active! If you're over 40 and have been relatively inactive, here are some tips:

- Check in with your doctor and get the green light before you begin. A thorough health check may be in order to insure that you have no hidden risks.
- Try a group exercise class with a certified instructor who can monitor your ability, technique and progress. Water aerobics and dance exercise classes are terrific options, and the social aspect of these classes is a great motivator.
- Pursue a well-rounded exercise program that includes resistance training, cardiovascular conditioning and flexibility exercises. A good weekly regimen might include three 10-minute weight training sessions, a brisk 30-minute walk five days a week, and a yoga or tai chi class twice a week. Any workout should include a proper warm-up and cool-down.

## Managing Menopause With Exercise

If you're going through menopause, you're familiar with the symptoms: hot flashes, weight gain, mood swings, and the health concerns: bone loss and increased risk of heart disease.

And while treatments abound for menopause, there is one – often overlooked – that has a positive influence on virtually every symptom and health risk: exercise.

Weight gain is a dreaded, yet common midlife experience for women. While it has been linked with menopause, many experts say inactivity and a poor diet are really to blame. Our metabolisms slow as we age, primarily from loss of muscle mass. At the same time, women in midlife are often enjoying the finer things in life such as traveling and eating out more often, which can promote weight gain. An eye-opening study of more than 500 women ages 42 to 50 suggests that on average women gained the same amount of weight whether or not they had gone through menopause.

So the remedy here is clear. Monitor your calories (and their nutritional content) and balance them with exercise. You don't have to forego the pleasures of life, says Judi Sheppard Missett, founder of Jazzercise, but enjoy them in moderation while keeping yourself physically active. The best exercise prescription for weight loss and maintenance is a combination of aerobic exercise, to strengthen the cardiovascular system and burn calories, and strength training, to build muscle mass which in turn boosts your metabolic rate.

Hot flashes are the bane of millions of menopausal women. Triggered by a slight rise in a woman's core body temperature, hot flashes range from 15 seconds to several minutes in length and occur four times per day for two to three years on average. Once again, exercise provides relief. Studies reveal that women who exercise experience fewer hot flashes. Likewise, women who exercise are less likely to be overweight, which also increases the incidence of hot flashes.

Mood swings can also be tempered by exercise, which has been shown to boost endorphins and increase confidence, body acceptance and self-esteem.

As for health concerns, the drop in estrogen that occurs during and after menopause is believed to accelerate bone loss. But weight-bearing exercise combined with calcium supplementation can help women preserve bone mineral density. Basically, bone density responds positively to the stress that weight-bearing activity provides.

And while a direct link between a drop in estrogen and a rise in heart disease has not been found, coronary heart disease rates in women do jump two to three times higher after menopause. Post-menopausal women often experience a rise in LDL cholesterol and triglycerides and a corresponding drop in HDL. Regular exercise can raise HDL levels, while the weight loss that often accompanies a fitness program will drop LDL levels.

With so many obvious advantages, why not make exercise a regular part of your day?

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## Discover the Fountain of Youth - Right in Your Own Home!

Believe it or not, the quest for extended youth begins and ends right in your own home and neighborhood. In fact, the fountain of youth is as close as your kitchen, bedroom and community park or fitness center.

Why? Because according to Jazzercise CEO Judi Sheppard Missett, the best way to look, feel and act younger is to eat right, sleep well and exercise regularly. So let's take a closer look at all three components of the "fountain of youth" formula.

**Diet** - A diet filled with fruits and vegetables, lean meats, low-fat dairy products and whole grains and limited amounts of alcohol, caffeine, saturated fat and refined flours and sugars, affects everything from energy levels to weight to glowing skin.

Let's face it. When you have more energy, you are more active. When you are more active, your weight stays in a healthy range and it's easier to maintain a youthful appearance. But it gets better: a proper diet can extend your life and even prevent wrinkles! Hundreds of studies show that what you eat affects your risk of heart disease, certain types of cancer, type 2 diabetes, and osteoporosis. A study at a university in Australia also found that individuals whose diets contained antioxidants (found in plant foods) and unsaturated fats (found in olive oil, avocados and almonds) were less prone to wrinkling than their counterparts who ate butter, red meat and sugar.

**Sleep** - When you sleep, your body repairs itself. As with a healthful diet, getting enough sleep leaves you with more energy and a healthier glow. But new research also suggests that it may help you maintain an appropriate weight. A series of studies published in the "Journal of the American Medical Association" and the "Lancet" indicate that sleep loss disrupts complex and interwoven metabolic and hormonal processes, which can make weight loss more difficult.

Chronic sleep deprivation also leads to a host of ailments ranging from fatigue to irritability, lack of concentration, impaired reaction time, and decreased immunity. Be sure to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night. You'll have more success if you go to bed and rise at approximately the same times each day. Also, avoid eating, exercising, drinking alcohol or consuming caffeine for at least three hours before bedtime.

**Exercise** - Most of the physical changes we attribute to aging - decreased muscle strength, weight gain, lack of endurance, and thinning bones - are the result of disuse more than advancing years. If you truly want to look and feel younger well into your golden years, make physical activity a priority. It is as simple as that.

Studies show that 20 minutes of cardiovascular exercise (brisk walking, cycling, jogging, swimming, dancing, etc.) performed three times a week will reverse every single biological risk factor and actually delay the onset of aging, according to health expert Deepak Chopra, author of "Grow Younger, Live Longer".

Of course, weight training is important, too, as it maintains bone density and muscle strength, as are activities that promote flexibility and balance, such as yoga and Pilates.

Functional exercises, which mimic everyday movement, are a good idea at any age. They train our bodies to keep up with life's daily challenges while avoiding injury.

## Three Keys to Workout Success

After a long day at work or rushing kids around town, it may take all your will-power to hop on the treadmill for 30 minutes, then crash onto the couch with a frozen dinner in one hand and your remote in the other. If this routine resembles your workout pattern, then pat yourself on the back for including some fitness into your daily lifestyle. Then, take a moment to examine if you are truly getting all the benefits of a well-rounded fitness program.

An effective fitness routine should include these three magic words: cardio, strength, and stretch. If any of these components is missing, then you are shortchanging your body. Take a look at the benefits of these three fitness must-haves:

**Cardio** – Cardiovascular exercise burns calories, plain and simple. Whether you are looking to lose or maintain weight, or just cultivate a healthy heart, then cardio is your prescribed regimen. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends working out for 20-60 minutes, three to five days per week, at 65-90% of your maximum heart rate. Of course, cardio has benefits beyond the calorie burn. When you increase your heart rate, your brain releases endorphins into your bloodstream, which give you increased energy and an improved mood.

**Strength** – Strength training stokes the fires of your metabolic furnace. When you add resistance training to your exercise regimen, you increase your body's muscle mass, which consequently raises your resting metabolic rate. A higher resting metabolism means that you'll burn more calories doing the same activities that you've always done! Strength training also builds your resistance to injury. An ACSM study found that women who lifted weights regularly for seven months were five times less likely to suffer a lower-body stress fracture than those who were less attentive to strength training.

**Stretch** – Flexibility is vital to many sports, such as gymnastics and sprinting. But, if you haven't done a cartwheel since second grade, then you may think that stretching isn't necessary for you. After all, it doesn't burn as many calories as cardiovascular exercise, nor does it tone muscles like strength training. Unfortunately, if you are neglecting the stretch portion of your workout, you may be placing your body at risk for injury. Stretching increases your range of motion for everyday tasks. The more flexible you are, the easier it will be to bend and rotate your body to pick-up crumbs from the floor or maneuver grocery bags into the car.

As you embark upon the journey of adding cardio, strength, and stretch into your workout, remember these tips from Judi Sheppard Missett, founder and CEO of Jazzercise, Inc.

If you can't make it to an exercise class, don't throw in the towel on breaking a sweat! Try a brisk walk around your neighborhood or jump rope during the commercials of your favorite show.

If you don't know where to start when it comes to strength training, book a few sessions with your gym's trainer or join a Personal Touch class at your local Jazzercise. Once you learn the basics of safe and effective movements, then you can maximize your workouts on your own.

Don't try intense stretches prior to your workout. It's better to utilize simple warm-ups early in your workout, and then engage in deeper stretches when your muscles are warm.

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## Eliminate Excuses For Exercise

There's a certain familiarity to the reasons people cite for not exercising: no time, too tired, no childcare, bad weather. Heard them before? Chances are you've even said them yourself. And while there certainly are real-life obstacles to getting 30 minutes of physical activity every day, Jazzercise CEO Judi Sheppard Missett challenges you to take a closer look at the most popular excuses for remaining sedentary.

— No time. Between work and family responsibilities, it's easy to feel strapped for time. But I'll bet a huge percentage of people find 30 minutes a day to watch television. What if you allotted that time to exercise instead? If time seems to slip away everyday, schedule your workout for a specific time and write it down on your daily planner, or get up 30 minutes earlier and enjoy an uninterrupted half hour to yourself at the start of the day.

— Too Tired. Believe it or not, regular physical activity actually boosts energy. When your body is healthy you have more vigor and vitality. Try it, you'll see!

— No childcare. This is a significant, but not insurmountable obstacle. Try exercising with your kids. Pop them in the stroller or bike cart and walk or ride for 30 minutes. If they are old enough, have them come along with you under their own power. Or, form a babysitting co-op with friends and neighbors that allows each of you time to workout. Join a health club or exercise program that provides babysitting. If you work, use your lunch hour to exercise. Get creative and you'll be surprised how your options open up.

— Bad weather. You can approach this two ways: find an indoor workout or invest in the right clothing. Both will allow you to keep exercising despite Mother Nature's mood.

Now that you have viable solutions for the perceived barriers to exercise, here are a few "must-haves" for your new fitness program:

— A support system. Whether it's your buddies from the babysitting co-op, friends or family members, you need to surround yourself with people who encourage you to get fit.

— Realistic goals. Losing weight isn't a cure-all for life's woes, but there's nothing better for improving your quality of life. With that in mind, don't set goals in pounds but by consistency. In other words, rather than saying 'I'm going to lose 30 pounds,' say "I'm going to walk for 30 minutes everyday."

— A balanced approach. A well-rounded exercise program includes aerobic conditioning (walking, swimming, cycling, running), resistance training and flexibility exercises. You can focus on one aspect per day or get it all in one shot with a fitness class that covers all the bases. For best results, exercise should also be accompanied by good nutrition and plenty of sleep.

— A fitness diary. One of the best ways to stay motivated is to track your success. And every time you workout you're successful! Write down what you did and for how long, along with how you felt before, during and after exercise. At the end of each week add up your exercise minutes and pat yourself on the back.

Now that we've taken care of the excuses, why not start your program today? If you like to dance, put on your favorite music and dance around your living room!

## Buddy Up To Lose Weight

It's no surprise that studies indicate people get fit and lose weight more effectively when they partner with a friend or family member.

Think about it. You're more likely to show up for a workout when you know people are expecting you and excited to see you. Jazzercise founder Judi Sheppard Missett says exercising with other people is also very motivating as the positive energy spreads from one participant to the next. How many times have you felt like skipping a workout only to discover how great you felt once you got there? An exercise partner can provide that extra incentive to follow through.

Whether it's exercise or dieting, being part of a group is helpful. A study conducted by researchers at Aston University and the Western Human Nutrition Center at the University of California found that organized weight loss groups offered several advantages, in particular reduced stress. People who dieted alone had significantly increased stress levels, which were linked to severely impaired task performance.

A Marywood University study of 75 overweight people also found that individuals who worked with others to lose weight were far more successful in shedding pounds and keeping them off a year later than people who dieted alone.

But as in any partnership, you need to find the right fit. Below are some suggestions for finding the perfect fitness and weight loss partner:

- Have the same goals. It's not a good match if you're looking to dance off a few pounds in an aerobics class and your partner wants to beat his or her best time in a 5K run.
- Don't waste your time on a partner who is late, whiny or a naysayer, which will only dampen your enthusiasm.
- Likewise you should pick someone whose companionship you value so that you are motivated to be prompt and upbeat.
- Have a set workout schedule and consider friendly penalties for not showing.
- Get your spouse moving. He/she is conveniently located, easily accessible and statistically in the same shape as you. Research indicates that women gain an average of 24 pounds over the course of 13 years of marriage, while men gain 19. But research also indicates that couples who begin an exercise program together are more likely to stick with it than single people, according to the "Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness."

In fact, says Judi Sheppard Missett, Jazzercise CEO, having family on your side can be invaluable to your health and fitness program. Having them exercise with you can make your efforts more fun while spreading the healthy benefits to everyone involved. What greater gift can you give to your family than fitness? There are many games and activities that you and your spouse can do with your children, and many exercises can go undercover as cool games for your kids.

# Exercise and Pregnancy – What to Expect, What to Do

So, you've just found out you're pregnant! Everything in your life is about to change, says Judi Sheppard Missett, founder of Jazzercise, including your exercise program. But, not to worry. To quote a cliché, we've come a long way, baby, especially when it comes to staying active and fit throughout pregnancy.

Thankfully, past recommendations for women to avoid vigorous activity during pregnancy have done an about face, with the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG) approving continued exercise for women who were active before conception. (If you were sedentary prior to conception, consult with your doctor before beginning an exercise routine.)

But you will experience changes with each trimester that impact your workout routine.

## What to Expect

**Trimester 1:** Fatigue, nausea and dizziness are likely to be the biggest obstacles to exercise during your first 12 weeks of pregnancy. When these problems arise, many women find that they can move their workouts to another time of day or decrease the intensity and duration of their exercise sessions and continue without a problem.

**Trimester 2:** While your energy returns by leaps and bounds, your center of gravity begins to shift during trimester two as the baby grows and you begin to gain weight. Many women experience lower back pain during this time as well, so you may want to incorporate some back stretches and strengthening exercises into your fitness program. I advise seeking out a personal trainer who has experience working with pregnant women. She can demonstrate exercises and exercise modifications that work well for your changing body.

**Trimester 3:** Fatigue and dizziness return during the final weeks of pregnancy as your blood reaches 150 percent of its pre-pregnancy volume. Now is the time to listen to your body and keep the intensity and duration of your workouts moderate.

## What to do

As I just mentioned, keep the intensity of your cardio workouts moderate throughout your pregnancy. Don't get out of breath to the point that you can't carry on a conversation during exercise. Never exercise to exhaustion! Keep in mind that as your blood volume increases during pregnancy your level of perceived exertion is a better measure of intensity than your heart rate, so pay attention to how you feel.

Lighten your load and increase repetitions during resistance training (the ACOG recommends one set of 12 to 15 reps), and be sure to breathe – exhaling as you lift and inhaling as you return to the starting position. Never hold your breath throughout a lift.

Add relaxation exercises such as yoga and stretching to your regimen. In addition to relieving daily tension, you can hone these skills for when you are in labor.

Avoid lying flat on your back for extended periods after the first trimester. The weight of your uterus can press on arteries and restrict blood flow to the fetus.

Don't exercise when it is extremely hot or humid to avoid dangerous increases in your body temperature.

If you're completely new to exercise and have your doctor's approval, try beginning with a walking program, a pre-natal yoga class or a water aerobics class. Look for instructors who are certified and have experience working with pregnant women. Your goal should be 30 minutes of moderate activity every day.

Always stop exercising and contact your obstetrician if you experience vaginal bleeding, dizziness or faintness, extreme shortness of breath, contractions or abdominal pain.

Stability balls are an excellent tool for moms-to-be. Not only do they strengthen your stabilization muscles and improve balance, but they also allow you to workout without descending all the way to the floor. This can make exercising more comfortable and allow you to perform exercises while avoiding a supine position (lying flat on your back) for prolonged periods of time.

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