

Exercise and Fat Loss!

By Thom Tombs

Part 1 (The Most Important Part): Discriminated Weight Loss

Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but if you are overweight, it's not because you consume too many carbs, too much fat, or too much protein; (warning - bumper alert!) it's because you consume more food than your body needs - period.

Impossible you say? OK, show me your food diary and calorie count!

If one of your goals is to reduce body fat in order to improve your health outlook and appearance, let's start by getting real.

A good fat-loss program will include a modest, negative-net caloric intake, plus strength training for exercise. Exercise plays an important and necessary role in FAT loss, but with all the unfortunate advice and misinformation regarding diet and 'calorie-burning' exercise we've all been raised on, it may surprise you to learn the real value of exercise with respect to fat loss in part 2- the second most important part - of our series.

We don't want to lose weight indiscriminately, right? No one has ever asked me, "Thom, I'm feeling fat, how can I lose some of my bone weight and organ tissue?"

If they did ask how to lose bone and organ tissue, I would recommend they first have their head examined, and then that they radically reduce

their calories and avoid exercise altogether; this way they would lose weight indiscriminately - coming from muscle, bone, organs, and fat. And get this, if the calorie reduction is drastic (less than 800/day), their body will cross over to the dark side (starvation mode - great for survival if you're actually starving, not so great if you're just trying to look and feel good). Too few calories, and the body will actually preserve body fat. That's right, if their calorie consumption is too low, initially they will lose everything *except* fat!

Our best solution for discriminated fat loss is to modestly reduce our caloric intake in combination with strength training exercise. If you're reading this, then you are likely already on the right track with your SuperSlow strength training exercise program. Next time, we will explore the value of exercise in relation to fat loss. (Spoiler) When your goal is to reduce body fat, 'cardio' may not be the friend you thought it was.

In his book *The Cardio-Free Diet*, Jim Karas writes, "Cardio kills your weight-loss plan, your joints, your immune system, your body composition, your time, and most of all, your motivation to stay committed to losing weight. But there's one thing cardio doesn't kill: your appetite."

In fact, cardio for exercise can be counter-productive when trying to lose body fat and preserve your hard-earned muscles.

Here are some popular diet modification programs. You will find success if you stick any of these eating plans. The best one is the one

that works best for YOU, so choose the program that best fits your life-style. Or, you can do what I do when I want to lose weight - eat less food and exercise once or twice a week.

- Wheat Belly, *W. Davis, MD*
- 17 Day Diet, *M. Moreno, MD*
- 4-Hour Body, *Tim Ferriss*
- A Flat Stomach ASAP, *E. Darden, PhD*
- The Paleo Diet, *Dr. Loren Cordain*
- The Zone Diet, *Dr. Barry Sears*
- Weight Watchers
- Jenny Craig

Part 2 (Exercise's Most Important Contribution): Increased Basal Metabolism

In our last article, we discussed the most important weight loss factor with respect to our health and well-being: ensuring discriminate fat loss versus indiscriminate weight loss. Think about it, do you want to lose weight from your bones or your vital organs? Do you want to lose your hair and nails? Surely, you do not want to lose your hard-earned muscle. No, in this case, we want to discriminate. We want to lose fat and only fat.

So now we know that our best solution for discriminated fat loss is to reduce our caloric intake in combination with strength training for

exercise. The second most important factor for the role of exercise in fat loss is increasing our basal metabolism. It is now believed that for every pound of muscle added, a human will burn an additional 10-16 calories per day.

You say that 10-16 calories per day doesn't sound like much?

Well, you're right, it's not much. And this is where most dieters get confused or impatient. As a result, they put themselves on the wrong track (or treadmill, or elliptical, or stationary bike). Most dieters assume that if they pick-up their "cardio" they will burn extra calories. With those extra calories "in the bank" they believe they will create a larger caloric deficit and lose weight faster, or they believe they can eat more calories and still lose weight

This first belief is insidious because on the scale it looks like its working great. Never mind, that you look gaunt, have little energy, are constantly hungry and are indiscriminately wasting your muscle, bone, and vital organ tissues thereby actually *reducing* your basal metabolism and preparing your body for easy fat gain later.

The problem with the belief that "cardio" lets you to eat a more while dieting gets people into trouble, too. Most of us (including the electronic calorie-counting treadmills) over-estimate the caloric affect of exercise. This often results in your consuming more calories than you thought you had exercised away.

Raising your basal metabolic rate is far more important than burning calories through exercise. The key to getting rid of body fat (vs. weight) is to increase our basal metabolism, and the only practical way to increase our basal metabolism is to build muscle.

Part 3: Improved Body Shape

The third most significant factor is improved body shape; the main determinants of which are mostly our bones, then our muscle and body fat. We don't get to choose the size and shape of our skeleton, just like we don't get to choose our natural eye-color or hair-color. However, we do have some control over how much muscle and body fat we have. The two brief stories below will help illustrate the idea of improved body shape:

A few months ago we had an initial consultation with a woman who is 4 feet 11 inches tall and weighed 89 pounds. Despite her small stature, she did not look gaunt nor under nourished. However, her number one goal was to lose four pounds - bringing her weight down to 85 pounds.

From her perspective, she felt this was a logical and necessary goal. From our perspective, we felt it was a lesson in how unrealistically obsessed our society is with weight. We began to consider that women in particular, regardless of whether they are currently at a healthy weight, strive to lose an additional 5 to 10 pounds with little or no regard to the impact on their overall body shape. They are pleased if the scale reports a lower number even at the expense of losing muscle.

By paying attention to the fact that your body shape is improving and your clothes are fitting better, it may help inspire you to make better decisions about what you eat to support your strength-training efforts. To focus on weight loss in a vacuum is to undermine the overall improved health and fitness level

you are achieving.

Another client who we've been working with for six months weighed well over 200 pounds and wore a size 24 when she first came-in. She is in her mid fifties, works full time, home-schools her eighteen year old autistic son, and cares for her elderly parents. She has high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and other health concerns. She came-in because she knew that if she didn't do something to improve her own health, there would be no one healthy enough to care for her son and elderly parents.

After six months of working together, our client dropped from a size 24 to a size 18. She is astounded by her body's metamorphosis. She is less often fatigued throughout the week, she doesn't injure herself while performing gardening and housework, and she feels stronger and more stable on her feet. Her doctor is also pleased with her improved vitals. Would you care to guess how much weight this woman has lost? Seven pounds! And as our client continues to make better food choices to further her SuperSlow workouts, the fat will continue to come off.

Focus on the positive changes that are occurring with your improving body shape, and continue to enhance your nutritional choices - when you do, the fat will melt away.

Part 4: Preoccupation

The most important contributions to healthy weight loss are:

- Keeping our bones, organs, and muscles heavy while reducing body fat weight

- Increasing lean muscle tissue in order to burn more calories
- Improving our body shape

Improving our body shape is really quite simple since there are really only two things we can do about it;

1. We can influence how much muscle we have.
2. We can influence how much excess body fat we carry around.

The fourth part in our fat loss series is “Preoccupation”. Or, in other words, stay busy so that you are not sitting around thinking about your next snack (or worse, sitting around eating your next snack mindlessly out of boredom).

“Pretend that you typically arrive home from the office every afternoon and plop in front of the television at 6pm. You eat dinner and watch television until 11pm and then retire.

After several months of this habit, you begin to feel guilty that you are wasting your life when those hours could be spent productively. You correctly reason that you could spend those wasted evenings for several months to renovate a room, finish the attic, or organize your garage. You implement a moratorium on evening television and embark on a project to finish the attic. After another several months, you have not only finished the attic, but a delightful surprise - your waistline is smaller. You then conclude that your reduction is due to the additional caloric expenditure of your increased activity. This is a natural mistake.”

-- Ken Hutchins

True, you may have spent a few more calories than you would have sitting on the couch. But more likely, the main contribution to your reduced waistline, was not haven

eaten the extra calories in the first place. Why? Because you were preoccupied - you were too busy to mindlessly eat more calories than your body needed. Ever try to eat a fish taco while power sanding? Me either...

Part 5: Diminished Appetite

The most significant contribution to successful fat loss is discussed in part 1, discriminated weight loss. The weight of our bones, organs, and muscles (aka lean body mass), is good weight! Although the scale fails to make the distinction between positive weight loss (body fat) and negative weight loss (lean body weight), dieters can't seem to stay off of them - often to their detriment. Hydration, fluid retention, muscle gain, muscle loss, bone loss and fat loss are all treated equally by the scale. Creating a moderate caloric deficit from a well-balanced diet combined with strength training is the quickest route to discriminate fat loss.

In part 2, we discussed the second most important factor, revving-up our resting metabolism by adding lean muscle tissue - get our body to burn more calories all day long regardless of what we're doing. In part 3, we discussed improving our body shape by increasing how much muscle we have and reducing how much body fat we have - really those are the only two things we can control which influence our body shape. In part 4, the topic of pre-occupation was discussed. Staying preoccupied works because we are not sitting around thinking about our next meal, snacking and/or eating mindlessly out of boredom.

Intense exercise like SuperSlow temporarily diminishes our appetite (clients love a refreshing bottle of cold water after a workout, but few would enjoy a hot cheeseburger and fries on their way out of the workout room). Unfortunately (or fortunately), we get to eat far more often than we perform high-intensity exercise, so the value of this exercise factor plays only a minimal role in fat loss.

Some individuals remark that exercise makes them hungry. Those are usually the individuals that train themselves to ignore their body's “not right now” signals and eat immediately after exercise anyway. Others starve themselves before exercise and find that they are hungry after exercise, too. Conclusion? “Exercise made me hungry, of course.”

Generally, moderate activity is a useful appetite depressant. Use this knowledge to your advantage. If you develop of craving for food, get up and clean the house, walk the dog, or wash the car. These activities won't burn a lot of extra calories, but they will depress your appetite, diminish your cravings, and keep you pre-occupied.

Part 6 (The Least Significant Contribution) Increased Caloric Expenditure

Increased activity does burn extra calories - a few... damn few.

-- Ken Hutchins

As we have been discussing the most important exercise factors for fat loss, you may have no-

ticed a proverbial giant elephant sitting quietly in the room. Conspicuously missing from our discussion so far is our final topic - increasing caloric expenditure through “cardio” exercise.

After a lifetime of my own experience with diet and the experience of talking with hundreds of clients about this topic over the years, here’s how the thinking usually goes:

- In order to lose weight, I know I must create a caloric deficit.
- The bigger the caloric deficit, the faster the weight loss.
- I eat very well and I like to eat whatever I want, so I don’t want to change what I’m eating or reduce my calories that much.
- What else can I do besides reducing calories?
- I know, I’ll start _____ (insert “cardio” activity here).

OK, let’s put all of this together with the concepts we discussed earlier in the series:

1. In order to lose weight, I know I must create a caloric deficit. **TRUE!**
2. The bigger the caloric deficit, the faster *weight* loss.

TRUE! But let’s ask a better question.

The bigger the caloric deficit, the faster the *fat* loss.

FALSE! We should ask ourselves, do we want to lose weight indiscriminately - muscle, bone, fat and organ tissue, or do we want to lose fat exclusively? To lose fat exclusively, we want to create a small caloric deficit while strength-training to ensure muscle gain. Too big of a deficit will lead to loss of fat, muscle, bone, and organ tissue - recom-

mended only if you enjoy frailty and looking and feeling like a zombie!

3. I eat very well, and I like to eat whatever I want, so I don’t want to change what I’m eating or reduce my calories that much.

HUH? You may not be prepared psychologically to make a real and lasting course change. You may wish for less body fat, but you haven’t really decided to modify your diet. Don’t worry, when you *are* serious about dropping fat, it’s easy. The decision to eat somewhat fewer calories is a small change which is easy to maintain. Often, when making better nutritional choices, you can actually eat more and still reduce calories! Plus, with healthier choices you can pretty much say good-bye to mood swings, drops in energy throughout the day, and many digestive troubles.

4. What else can I do besides reducing calories?

HELLO! Refer to the earlier parts of this series. Rev-up your resting metabolism by adding lean muscle tissue, stay pre-occupied with mindful activities, and if you do develop a craving, get up and clean the house, throw a ball to your kids, walk the dog, or wash the car. Like jogging or Pilates, these activities won’t burn a lot of extra calories, but they will help depress your appetite, diminish your craving, keep you pre-occupied, plus you’ll score big points with your loved ones.

5. I know, I’ll start _____ (insert “cardio” activity here).

Unless “cardio activity x” really is what you love doing, NOOOOOOOOOOOO!

Instead, do things that need doing or things that you do enjoy doing. I recommend that you read the first several chapters of *The Cardio-Free Diet* by Jim Karas to convince yourself to give-up trying to lose weight by burning-up additional calories with time-consuming cardio routines. Karas writes, “Cardio kills your weight-loss plan, your joints, your immune system, your body composition, your time, and most of all, your motivation to stay committed to losing weight. But there’s one thing cardio doesn’t kill: your appetite.” We have a copy of his book in our mini library; feel free to borrow it any time.

The Mayo Clinic agrees, “[t]he key to weight loss is burning more calories than you consume. Because 3,500 calories equals about 1 pound (0.45 kilogram) of fat, you need to burn 3,500 calories more than you take in to lose 1 pound. So if you cut 500 calories from your diet each day, you’d lose about 1 pound a week (500 calories x 7 days = 3,500 calories).”

If you’re building muscle while modestly reducing your caloric intake, you can be sure you’re losing fat! There you have it folks, working and building your muscles is the primary role of exercise in fat loss.

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