



## Busting Health and Fitness Myths

**Pain Not Necessary for Health and Fitness, but Walking Is**

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WebMD Feature

Calm down. Women who lift weights *don't* get bulky muscles. Pain *is not* necessary to achieve gain. A huge time commitment *is not* required for health and fitness. And what about walking? Is walking all it's cracked up to be?

The American Council on Exercise (ACE) is helping us sort through what we've heard about health and fitness -- the myths vs. the truth.

Make no mistake, walking gets brownie points. "If anything, walking is probably underrated," says physiologist and ACE spokesman Richard Cotton.

What's written about walking does hold water, he says. "If America began to walk even a minimal amount -- 30 minutes a day -- it would turn around the epidemic of heart disease and obesity."

But here are the myths:

- **Women who lift weights will get bulky muscles.** Women don't have enough testosterone to develop large, bulky muscles, says ACE. Strength training will not cause women to build muscles, although steroids might.
- **Spot reducing is possible.** Guess again. It's simply not possible to "burn off" fat in one specific body part by exercising that area, ACE states. Numerous studies have tried to refute this claim. But only regular exercise -- aerobic and strength -- and a sensible diet can melt body fat.
- **No pain, no gain.** Yikes. Exercising to the point of pain can harm you, not help. It's OK to push yourself a bit, to tax your heart, lungs, muscles and bones -- but be reasonable. Don't risk an injury.
- **If you exercise, you can eat whatever you want.** You're joking, right? A healthy diet goes hand-in-hand with a sound exercise regimen, ACE states. For weight loss, eat more fruits and veggies, far fewer sugary foods, and EAT LESS.
- **Exercise requires a hefty time commitment.** As little as 30 minutes a day works when you're in health-and-fitness maintenance mode, and 60 minutes a day will help you lose weight.
- **There's a magic bullet out there.** Yet another joke. There is no quick fix, says ACE. Those nutritional supplements often use "deceptive, misleading, or fraudulent advertising," ACE advises.

Katie Heimburger, MS, exercise physiologist in Atlanta, adds a few more health and fitness myths to the list:

- **Muscle weighs more than fat.** "In simple terms, a pound of muscle weighs the same as a pound of fat," Heimburger tells WebMD. "The difference is that muscle is much more dense than body fat. Therefore, a pound of muscle will take up much less room in your

body than a pound of fat. Another benefit of muscle, it is significantly more vascular [better blood supply] than body fat and will cause you to burn more calories at rest than body fat."

- **Exercising at low intensity burns more fat.** "This is a particularly confusing topic for some people," says Heimburger. "Many people have thought that lower intensity is the fat-burning zone. But in reality, you're burning a greater percentage of total calories -- including fat calories -- when you exercise at a higher intensity."

What puts health and fitness myths in our minds? It's those get-skinny-quick product ads, Cotton says. "People want to know what's the easiest possible way to get from here to there." When it comes to health and fitness, "there's no magic bullet."

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SOURCES: News release, American Council on Exercise. Richard Cotton, exercise physiologist and ACE spokesman. Katie Heimburger, MS, exercise physiologist, Atlanta.

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