

Weight Loss “Magic”

On January 12, 2005 the Federal Government released its then new dietary guidelines - eat less, exercise more. Well duh. That simple truth should be enough to confirm that there are no magic pills, no reinvented wonder wheels, and no ab fantastic barcalounger thingy ma jigs to do otherwise, even if there are only three easy payments of \$19.95 plus shipping and handling. We've all been around the block. We should know better. Just like the federal gov says, it boils right down to intake versus output. If you put out more than you take in, you create a caloric deficit, thus losing weight. If you take in more than you put out, you create a caloric surplus, thus gaining weight. The question is how much is too much and how little is too little? The answer, as you might imagine, is somewhat complicated and confusing. This complicated confusion is what makes the ab fantastic barcalounger thingy ma jig folks rich. The seller capitalizes on the ignorance of the consumer!

Let's cut through some of the caloric and metabolic red tape and dispel some long standing myths that abound in the field of health and fitness.

Spot Reduction - we lose fat on our bodies at the same rate from head to toe. As such, we can not target a specific area on our body for fat loss. All of the stomach crunches in the world will not make much of a dent in your midsection. At best they will strengthen the abdominal wall. Done improperly, they can cause injury.

Diet, the four letter word - O.K. folks, here is the short version. Extreme caloric reduction will result in weight loss, but the problem lies in the type of weight you are losing. While you may be losing some fat weight you are also losing muscle weight and water weight. Less muscle weight means less calorically active tissue, which means a lower resting metabolism. Now you have begun a vicious cycle in which your body fat percentage, by virtue of the fact that you have less muscle and a slower metabolism, has gone up!

Absolute weight loss vs Fat loss/Muscle gain - if a client came to me with a goal of losing 25 pounds in a month I would propose this - how about losing 15 pounds in about four months and keeping it off while dropping two pant sizes at the same time? For the sake of this example let's say that moderate, conversational pace aerobic activity coupled with a strength program produces a caloric output of 150 calories. At the same time you are preserving valuable lean muscle mass, which is thermogenically active tissue. This results in an increase in your resting metabolic rate, so you will burn more calories even while you sleep!

From there, reducing your daily caloric intake by 350 would produce a net caloric deficit of 500 calories. That is 3500 calories per week, equal to one pound, or 4 pounds per month. Four months later you are stronger and leaner and have the energy to go shopping for new pants!

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