

Diet or Exercise?

A question was posed by a friend as to whether one can just reduce calories (dieting) rather than exercise to lose weight and reduce risk of diseases. The article below provide an explanation why exercise is necessary to maintain muscle mass and fitness and that one should do both.

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By [Craig Ballantyne](#)

You may have heard of the "calorie restriction movement," based on animal studies that indicate cutting your calorie intake by 20 percent could reduce your risk of disease and even help increase your lifespan by 20 percent. Despite the fact that researchers don't yet know whether calorie restriction will work for humans, this form of dieting is gaining popularity.

But there is a downside to extreme dieting: If you diet and don't also exercise, you'll lose muscle mass and fitness.

In a study published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology*, healthy men and women between 50 and 60 years of age went on a one-year weight-loss program. One group lost weight through diet only (calorie restriction), while the other group lost weight through exercise (just cardio - no strength training).

Both groups lost a similar amount of weight. However, while the exercise group increased their fitness levels, the diet group lost lower-body strength and muscle and cardiovascular fitness.

Obviously, the best choice for a fat-loss program is a combination of diet and exercise. So don't just starve yourself thin. Focus on healthy eating, interval training, and total-body strength training to build the health and fitness you need as you grow older.

It is so true because one of the most critical muscles in our body is the heart and exercise helps keep the heart in tip-top condition. Or ask any bedridden patient such as one recovering from stroke and he or she will tell you need to learn to walk again after in bed for a couple of months because muscles get wasted away very quickly.

But is this the only reason why one needs to exercise. Exercise provides two other important roles.

Firstly when one exercise the body actually secretes a hormone called endorphins which gives the person a high and makes you feel good and happy. That is the reason why some people are addicted to exercise. My brother for example said he gets a high from jogging and takes part in every marathon.

The other important function of exercise is that our lymphatic system is totally depended on body movement to move the lymphatic fluid (similar to our blood fluid minus the haemoglobins). Unlike our blood system which has a pump which is our

heart to circulate blood supplying nutrients to tissues and organs the lymphatic system which helps to remove toxins from organs does not have a pump. The analogy is our water supply and sewage system. The former works on pressure whereas the latter is passive and depends on gravity. Without exercise our lymphatic system will not be effective in removing toxins from our body.

So how much does one need to exercise? Ironically, excessive exercise or exercise to the point of exhaustion is bad for the body. When one is short of breath, insufficient oxygen creates free-radicals (which damage body cells) and lactic acid in our body which weakens our immune systems and hastens ageing. Have you noticed that marathoners actually age faster or you feel faint if you are exhausted in game. This month (Sept 2007) Newsweek issue quotes two medical associations that say that a person only need about 30mins per day of brisk walking 5 days a week plus and 8 to 10 strength-training exercises like sit-ups or push-ups twice a week.

Our lymphatic system is connected to every cells and organs in our body just like our blood system. Whereas blood supplies 'oxygen' and nutrients the lymphatic system has the reverse action. It is the 'garbage collector', the internal vacuum cleaner that sucks up metabolic garbage, toxins and excess fluid from the extra-cellular fluid of every organ. If this flow is impaired the fluid becomes toxic. The lymphatic system is filled with millions of one-way valves that allow lymph fluid to flow in only one direction. Exercise, external massage and muscle activity helps to stimulate the flow of lymph fluid, pushing the fluid through these one-way valves. The opening and closing of these valves move the fluid along and prevent backflow.

The lymph system is the most over-looked system of the human body and many people have badly congested lymphatic system and do not even know it. Most doctors seldom consider this system's critical role in preventing illness and its importance to overall healing process. Some of the organs that are part of the lymphatic are lymph nodes, lymph veins, tonsils, appendix and spleenand you know what the surgeons will do to them when they get close to them. Swollen glands are symptomatic of blocked lymph nodes and examples of congested lymphatic system are allergies, chronic sinusitis, heart disease, eczema and other skin conditions, loss of energy, fibrocystic disease, chronic fatigue, high blood pressure, arthritis, cellulite, inflammation, obesity, etc

So if you want to be healthy, clean up your lymph!