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Aerobics (Cardio) Should Not Be Your "Priority Focus" for Lasting Weight Loss

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This is something I've talked about before when it comes to weight loss (fat loss), but I believe the **biggest mistake** in the "mindset" of people today is thinking that **enough exercise** can get them the weight loss they want and should be their "top" priority.

I was reminded of this recently by a person I see in the gym who is doing at least **2+ hours of daily cardio** and some weights. He is in there 4-5x a week and I kid you not, brings food to the gym to snack on while he works out. I've consulted with him in the past and told him that he needed to focus less on working out and more on eating correctly, yet his response was "Oh...I can't do that, I like to eat too much...so I need to workout instead".

Wrong.....wrong....wrong. Sadly he never lost much weight (and months later even looked like he gained more around his stomach).

So instead of thinking the answer was in his eating, he is **brainwashed by some mainstream myth about exercise can cure everything**. If people want lasting changes in their health and weight loss, they need to start with the most important muscle.....the brain. People need to understand that **exercise is NOT the cure all** for losing weight **WHEN nutrition is neglected**. The fact that most advice you hear is "exercise more" is just not helping to get the right mindset when most probably need to be hearing "eat less" or "eat more real foods".

Below is an interesting quote from an article entitled ["Study: Exercise Won't Cure Obesity"](#):

Researchers from Loyola University Health System and other centers compared African American women in metropolitan Chicago with women in rural Nigeria. On average, the Chicago women weighed 184 pounds and the Nigerian women weighed 127 pounds.

Researchers had expected to find that the slimmer Nigerian women would be more physically active. To their surprise, they found **no significant difference between the two groups in the amount of calories burned during physical activity**.

"Decreased physical activity may not be the primary driver of the obesity epidemic," said Loyola nutritionist Amy Luke, a member of the study team.

There are also downsides to being a "cardio" junkie.....remember more is not better in most cases....here's a couple good points from Steve Maxwell on some of his [top 10 reasons he doesn't do aerobics](#):

- Oxidative Stress** - Which causes a breakdown of tissues. It also predisposes one to cancer and heart attack.
- Elevated cortisol production** - Which causes a breakdown of muscle tissue and increases fat storage or depot fat. People do aerobics to alleviate stress yet end up creating more stress.
- Lowered testosterone and HGH levels** For men, aerobics are a form of chemical castration. Low T-levels are associated with lowered libido, depression, anxiety, increased body fat and decreased muscle tissue. This contributes to muscle-wasting and lowers the basal metabolic rate.
- Increased appetite and a tendency toward binge eating patterns** Aerobic exercise makes people hungry!
- Burns a relatively small amount of calories vs. the time spent** One large meal completely offsets the pitiful amount of calories burned in an hour aerobics session. This is exacerbated by over-engineered running shoes which cushion the feet in such a way to create a neural amnesia.
- Adrenal burnout** A consequence of the 'feel good' neurotransmitters which also stimulate the release of adrenaline. Adrenaline is the *fight or flight* hormone. Excessive adrenaline creates an addictive response and people going routinely for the so called 'high' of running end up with adrenal burnout, e.g., chronic fatigue and depression.

Dr. Kenneth Cooper, the father of aerobic exercise (and the person who coined the term) completely recanted his assertions regarding aerobic exercise. After observing a disproportionate number of his aerobic-enthusiast friends die of cancer and heart disease, he reversed his ideas on the benefits of excessive aerobic exercise. He now claims anything in excess of 20 minutes has greatly diminishing returns. In fact, he's now an advocate of scientific weight training.

and from Mark Sisson (a former "cardio junkie") he gives [his case against cardio](#):

During my 20+ years as a competitive endurance athlete, I logged tens of thousands of training miles running and on the bike with the assumption that, in addition to becoming fit enough to race successfully at a national class level, I was also doing my cardiovascular system and the rest of my body a big healthy favor.

The first signal I had that something was wrong was when I developed debilitating osteoarthritis in my ankles at age 28. This was soon coupled with chronic hip tendinitis and nagging recurrent upper respiratory tract infections. In retrospect, it is clear now that my carbohydrate-fueled high-intensity aerobic lifestyle was promoting a dangerous level of continuous systemic inflammation, was severely suppressing other parts of my immune system and the increased oxidative damage was generally **tearing apart my precious muscle** and joint tissue.

The stress of high intensity training was also leaving me soaking in my own internal cortisol (stress hormone) bath. It wasn't so clear to me at the time exactly what was happening " in fact it was quite confusing, since I was doing so much of this so-called 'healthy' aerobic exercise but I had no choice but to give up racing, unable to train at anywhere near the intensity required to stay at an elite level.

The costs of chronic (repetitious) mid- and high-level aerobic work

- requires large amounts of dietary carbohydrates (SUGAR)
- decreases efficient fat metabolism
- increases stress hormone cortisol
- increases systemic inflammation
- increases oxidative damage (free radical production)
- boring!

and if you want to look at the longevity aspect of those who live long, you won't see that "cardio" activity actually plays a huge role. Here's a piece from a [NY Times article on looking at longevity](#) factors from centenarian people around the world:

The most common thing this group had is that they did not reveal any particular lifestyle secret for their own longevity. When asked specifically, none has exercised. None was a vegetarian. Not a single one ate yogurt throughout his life.

Workout for Metabolic Responses...Not Duration

Now before people start assuming I said it's ok to just sit on a couch and eat chips, that's not the point of all this. The point being in your battle against weight loss, you need to start **where it matters the most...in how and what you eat**. From there you compliment your efforts with **"effective" exercise**...and not "excessive" exercise. Too many people are being excessive in what they do, expecting faster results somehow. Slow and steady (and healthy) should be your mindset...and the results will come soon enough. So if weight loss is the goal...just keep it simple and focused:

- You need to **eat in some calorie deficit (eat less) but do NOT "starve"** yourself either. Exercise does of course burn "some" additional calories, but not that much compared to the **damage you can do with a fork** especially rebounding off excess exercise recovery demands.
- Do some **short and intense/resistance training**. Intense exercise can raise fat **"releasing" hormones** such as GH and keep the metabolism strong even while in calorie deficit. Muscle is also where fat is burned. The more muscle you have/maintain, the more "fat burning" factories you have made. Excess exercise may just **tear down your muscle** for fuel, and leave your fat burning metabolism worse off for the long run.
- Eat real foods**. It's that simple. Excessive processed foods/sugars/grains can become a **metabolic disaster to your system** and all the hormones involved. People have found weight loss easy once they just started eating real (or as some call Paleo) foods. Through more real foods, you can actually be eating less calories overall. If it wasn't around 1000 years ago, then you probably don't need to be eating it.
- Be active, in a lifestyle capacity**. Do activities you enjoy, leave the HR monitor at home (or just toss it out). If you want to go for a trail run, go run....if you want to go for a mountain bike ride, go ride....if you want to play tennis, go play...go walking, go hiking, go do some sprints....enjoy what you do. But stop some excessive pre-planned cardio routine that you "think" is burning fat....when the complete opposite may actually be going on. If your activity requires you to be **eating more calories** just to recover and most in the form of sugar drinks/bars...how are you helping your fat loss efforts?
- Lastly....stop blowing out your adrenals (which will effect the thyroid) with excessive stress. **Excessive exercise can be a stress to the body** as well as your "mental" stress. Want to gain weight in the long run? Then just stay stressed all day and see what happens. Want to compromise your hormones and health, then skip on your sleep by staying up late. Many don't appreciate the health you have right now, until it is gone that is. Screw up your metabolic system now, and you will have a much bigger struggle with weight loss later. **So keep happy, keep things simple and get your sleep!**

Be Active, Have Fun, Eat Right and Enjoy the Journey!

There you have it. Our mainstream **obsession to cardio** as the answer for all weight issues...may actually be causing more down the road. If you think excess oxidative damage, excess free radicals and excess amount of calories needed is a good plan long term...well, good luck to you is all I can say. Heck, it may **even increase your risk** of sudden death too!

Dr. Thompson's studies and others show that the chances of sudden death are about one in every 15,000 to 18,000 exercisers per year. That comes to one death for every 1.5 million exercise bouts. Curiously, the **most serious endurance athletes seem to be at the greatest risk**. Here's how it breaks down, according to an often-cited 1982 study published in the New England Journal of Medicine:

- One death per 17,000 men who exercise vigorously 1 to 19 minutes a week
- One death per 23,000 men who exercise vigorously 20 to 139 minutes a week
- One death per 13,000 men who exercise vigorously 140 or more minutes a week

I had to look at the chart twice to see its startling conclusion: **The highest death rate is among the men who exercise long and hard**, and is much higher than that of the men who exercise short and hard. Worse, **the guys who do hardly any vigorous exercise had a lower death rate than the guys who do the most**.

Source: ["Death by Exercise". Men's Health](#)

You may be **running down a road of metabolic burnout** (adrenal/thyroid issues) and also possibly increasing risks for degenerative diseases at the cellular level (destroy your cells with excess damage from oxidative/free radicals). That and you will certainly pack on the weight later once your metabolic system is dysfunctional (the "yo-yo" weight syndrome).

Again note I am not saying that you shouldn't be active, it just needs to be a more lifestyle approach than some crazy long and addictive cardio session. **More is not better, smarter is!** In a nation with a gym on every corner, and 100,000s of people running marathons every month....why is the state of health getting worse and worse (and people not losing weight long term)?

Slow and steady always seems to work (along with some **short intense workouts** to boost metabolic responses and protection)....that and focus on eating real foods first!

Find out what the "IF Life" is all about and learn why your fears about not eating all day may actually be keeping you from getting the results you are after. Just enter email below and click on "Get Access Now" button for the free PDF to be sent to you.

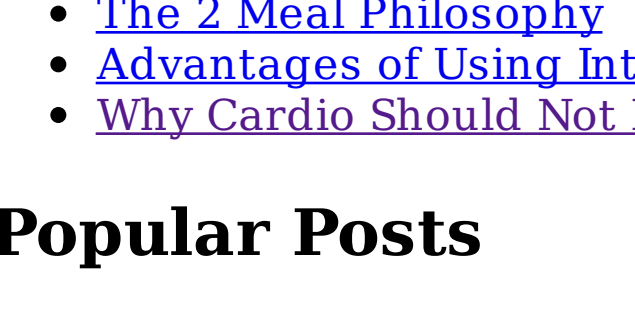
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Meet "2 Meal" Mike



Mike O'Donnell has been a fitness trainer and coach for 12+ years promoting simple eating and exercise solutions. Mike's programs are based on years of research, experience and getting people results. Mike created ["The IF Life"](#) in 2008 as a place to help people break free from complicated solutions. Mike is also the author of the [2 Meal Solution](#). You can connect with Mike also on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

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