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What weight?

Not sure how many kilos you should be lifting in the gym? Rather than choosing based on how 'light' or 'heavy' a weight is, choose relative to how many repetitions you can do. If you can only do four-to-six reps with proper form, the weight is too heavy. If you can do 15-20 reps and feel like you could easily do more, you are using a weight that is too light. Don't push yourself too hard, just to the point where you can't perform another rep without breaking form.

Trainer tell you to work at 'moderate intensity'? You should be working at about 50-70 per cent of your maximum capacity. You should be 'huffing and puffing'.

Washboard abs

1000 sit-ups a day won't give you great-looking abs if there is a layer of fat covering them! Get on a bike, treadmill, or an elliptical trainer to work the large muscle groups, therefore burning more calories. Also keep up your resistance with strength training.

Water workout

On average, we lose nearly a litre of water during one hour of vigorous exercise! Our muscles need to be well hydrated to work, so drink 2-3 cups of water in the hours prior to your workout, then another immediately before. Then drink one cup every 15-20 minutes during exercise.

Contrary to popular belief, you won't burn fat by exercising at a slower intensity. You will only condition yourself at a very low level, but won't burn the necessary calories you need to lose weight. To get the best results, increase your intensity over time.

Q&A

with online personal trainer

Sue Heintze

Why do I get cravings, and how can I combat them?

Firstly, ask yourself if you are you really hungry – or are you bored, tired, anxious or upset?

If you're not really hungry, you may be able to fend it off just by changing activities. Go for a walk, talk on the phone or just wait it out for 15 minutes. Often cravings lose strength after a short period of time.

Often, cravings for food are actually thirst in disguise, as many of us are constantly under-hydrated. Drink a couple of glasses of water, wait a few minutes and check to see if you're still hungry.

If it's fatty foods you crave, or you never feel completely 'satisfied' after a meal, you may be low in essential fatty acids. Try eating more oily fish like salmon, or supplementing your diet with fish oil or flaxseed oil.

Some foods seem irresistible at night, such as chocolate or ice cream. This may be due to your fluctuations in blood sugar and insulin during the day. To smooth out the blood-sugar roller coaster, try a diet that's higher in protein, good quality fats, vegetables and the occasional fruit and remove the processed, manufactured junk.

Avoid eating carbohydrates by themselves; rather, mix them with some protein. And avoid snacking on high-carbohydrate foods before bed, as high circulating levels of insulin will stop fat burning during sleep.

Don't be fooled into having just a 'taste' of the food you crave. This may set up a cascade of biochemical processes in sugar-sensitive people that invariably translates to an overwhelming desire for more of the same.

Supplements that may help to combat cravings are chromium, fish oil, flaxseed oil, and glutamine but please do your research before taking any supplements.

Diarrise it

Do you stick to an exercise schedule for two weeks then fall off the wagon only to return six or 12 months later? Diarrise your exercise, just like you would any other important meeting or event, then schedule other commitments around it.