

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We've put together our answers to some of the most common questions we hear from our YMCA members. If you have a question regarding your exercise or nutrition program that you don't see here, please contact Kristen kmunderwood@ctc.net and we'll include it on our Frequently Asked Questions link.

- **QUESTION: How Can I Get Rid Of This Extra Weight Around My Middle?**

The answer to this question involves a number of factors that work together. There is no "magic exercise" designed to target excess body fat that a person may store in their mid section. A balanced diet consisting of the correct amount of quality calories for an individual's lifestyle is the first part of the equation. Calorie intake is based on a person's Resting Metabolic Rate, activity level, and desired healthy weight. All of these factors can be determined with the help of a trained/qualified nutrition or fitness specialist.

Exercise is the next step in the process. A total body approach to exercise has shown to produce the most effective results in reducing a person's percentage of body fat. A total body exercise program can help reduce your mid section by increasing your overall percentage of muscle mass. People who have more muscle mass are more efficient at utilizing calories, even at complete rest, and therefore tend to have a lower percentage of body fat.

Fluid Intake, especially water, is an important part of a weight loss program. Studies have shown that a decrease in water intake will cause fat deposits to increase, while an increase in water intake can actually help reduce fat deposits. Here's why...The kidneys can't function properly without enough water. When a person doesn't drink enough water, their kidneys don't work at full capacity and some of their work load is dumped onto the liver. One of the liver's primary functions is to help metabolize stored fat into useable energy for the body. If the liver has to do some of the kidney's work, it can't operate at maximum efficiency. As a result, the liver metabolizes less fat. More fat remains stored in the body and the person gains undesirable fat weight

Stress can also be another major contributor to a person's increased body fat percentage. Too much stress even affects where we tend to store fat! Greater levels of abdominal fat are linked with higher levels of stress. There is an abundance of research on the subject of stress. Many studies conclude that exercise programs may help individuals who are coping with higher levels of stress in their lives

- **QUESTION: Which Should I Do First Weights Or Cardio Workout?**

I recommend completing your cardio workout before your strength training. The reason for this is that it's not a good idea to exert maximum efforts, lifting weights, while your muscles are not sufficiently warmed up. Injuries are more likely if you do. Your cardio workout, whether it be walking, running, swimming cycling or any other form, serves not only to condition your cardiovascular system, but provides a warm up effect for muscles and joints. Also, if you fatigue your muscles by completing your strength training workout first, you'll likely not be able to perform as effectively the exercises that you choose for your cardio workout.

- **QUESTION: How Should I breathe When I Lift Weights?**

Whatever you do, don't hold your breath during any exercise activity. Your muscles need oxygen during your workouts, so proper breathing is very important. Also, holding your

breath during exercise can produce dizziness, light headedness ringing in the ears or even loss of consciousness due to lack of oxygen to the brain. It is generally recommended to exhale on the most difficult part of the exercise, called the work phase, and inhale on the easier part of the exercise, called the recovery phase. On the bench press for example you would inhale as the bar is lowered to your chest and exhale as you push the bar back toward the ceiling.

- **QUESTION: What exercise burns the most calories?**

This depends in large part on the amount of effort you put into the exercise, however, based on the number of calories used per minute of exercise, Running appears to be the most effective. Running is a total body, high impact activity that requires the exerciser to exert a greater effort to continue, than most anything else you can do. If running is not an option for you, pick an exercise that you enjoy, that uses as many muscles in unison as possible. Examples would be Swimming, Aerobic Class Activities, Rowing, Brisk Walking. I've also read that the residual calorie burn (that is calories you continue to burn after the exercise session) is greater for strength training exercises than it is for cardiovascular exercises. Definitely want to include some weight lifting into your program!

- **QUESTION: Can I lift weights or workout every day?**

Too Much Of A Good Thing Is Not Good...It is not recommended for a person to consistently exercise muscle groups on consecutive days. You actually tear muscle tissue down when you exercise. The growth, development and improvement takes place in the 48 hours after your exercise session. Rest is just as important as the workout, so schedule some "Off Days" into your training program.

- **QUESTION: What Is The Best Time Of The Day To Workout?**

The best time of day to workout is the time that's most convenient for you. I know of no research that shows that people who work out early in the morning are more fit, or stronger or faster than those who workout mid day or evening. Some people feel they are more productive throughout the day if they get up and get started with a workout. Others say they can't seem to get moving well until around noon, so they don't want to waste their time trying to exercise early in the morning. Still others enjoy exercising after their other daily responsibilities are complete, as a way to relax and unwind. Whenever you exercise, will be determined by your personal situation. I do recommend choosing an exercise time that is relatively consistent. People tend to stick with a routine, and exercising at the same general time each workout will help you stay motivated and focused.

- **QUESTION: Can I Work My Abdominals Every Day?**

Too Much Of A Good Thing Is Not Good...It is not recommended for a person to consistently exercise muscle groups on consecutive days. Abdominal muscles respond well to rest, after a workout, just like biceps, quadriceps or deltoids. Folks who are looking for a strong core or those six pack abs would be well advised to rest up after a hard abdominal workout.