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Health & Fitness
Q & A

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Fitness tips can help keep those resolutions

Since most of my readers are probably in the midst of trying to achieve their New Year's resolutions, I've compiled a few tips to help.

One of my goals, with all my clients, is to improve the efficiency of their workouts. In other words, achieve maximum results in minimum time. Consider incorporating some of the following advice into your workout routine. You'll notice the benefits almost immediately.

■ **Empty-stomach cardio:** Performing cardiovascular exercise on an empty stomach will yield enormous gains in bodyfat reduction. During any exercise, your body must deplete blood-sugar stores before using other sources of energy. Blood sugar, or glucose, usually depletes after 20 minutes of exercise. After blood sugar depletes, the body will begin burning stored fat for energy. Performing cardiovascular exercise on an empty stomach will allow the body to begin burning stored fat almost immediately. By the way, when I say empty stomach, I mean "without food," not "without water." So, go ahead and sip water

■ **Metabolic Boost:** Want to boost your body's metabolism? Drink a cup of coffee or green tea 30 minutes before your workout. You'll have more energy, more endurance, more stamina and burn more calories. The caffeine inside coffee and tea acts as a thermogenic agent — increasing heart rate and metabolism. Caffeine works best when it's introduced into the body — not when it's re-introduced into the body. In other words, the effects are most noticeable if you drink one or two cups a day. Any more, and your body begins to develop a tolerance — or worse, an addiction. How can you tell if you're addicted to caffeine? If you're one of these people who literally can't function until you've had a cup of coffee, you're addicted.

■ **Slimming your belly:** Want to slim your belly faster than ever before? Strength train your legs diligently and consistently. Building up the muscle in your quads, hamstrings, calves and glutes will give your body a faster metabolism. All those people doing crunches and sit-ups until they're blue in the face? It's a waste of time. If you can add one pound of muscle to your body, your metabolism will burn an extra 50 cal-

ories per day. It's easy to add muscle to your legs — quadriceps especially build quickly. Strengthening and making these muscles bigger will help you lose fat faster than ever before. Squats and lunges are the best.

■ **Fitness Breakfast:** Short on time but still realize the importance of a good breakfast? Make a smoothie. Blend a scoop of low-sugar chocolate or vanilla protein powder with a frozen banana and soy milk. Feel free to add flax seed oil, cinnamon, frozen berries, honey, all-natural peanut butter, or some oats to the mix. The protein from the powder makes you feel full, and the fructose in the banana will give you immediate energy to start your day. Oh yeah, it tastes great, too.

■ **Don't eat before bed:** Want to wake up feeling lean, refreshed and not bloated? Skip any meals three hours before sleep. Eating a medium or large meal before bed is a bad idea. During sleep, a person's digestive system shuts down. This means that the food you eat before bed literally sits in your stomach overnight. You'll mess up your

blood sugar, possibly causing a stomach ache or feelings of nausea. Ideally, a small snack should be consumed two to three hours before sleep. Any more food and you'll regret the morning after.

■ **Eliminating empty calories:** Immediately, cut all sodas, sweetened beverages, sugary drinks and flavored beverages. Nothing packs on the pounds quicker than drinking calories. Besides causing rapid weight gain, these drinks are considered a source of empty calories — which means they contain no nutritional value. Oh yeah, beer is considered an empty calorie beverage as well. Even worse, alcohol is a downer — a depressant that slows your metabolism temporarily. Who needs that?

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