



# TEST YOUR FITNESS IQ

Fitness editor **Martha Lourey-Bird** reveals 10 facts that will change your workout.

## DOING SIT-UPS GETS RID OF TUMMY FAT

**FALSE:** Spot reduction does not work. You can't exercise a certain body part – be it tummy, thighs, or bottom – and expect it to shrink. If this was the case, our mouths would shrink from talking and our fingers from typing! Doing resistance exercises such as sit-ups strengthens and tones the muscles underneath the fat but you need to do fat-burning exercise such as walking, swimming or cycling, as well. Fat is then lost gradually from all over the body but you may find that the first

place you put it on, could be the last place you lose it from – so stick with it.

## WEIGHT TRAINING ASSISTS WEIGHT LOSS

**TRUE:** Weight training is an important part of any fitness program and an excellent addition to cardio exercise. Among many things, it helps boost your metabolism (the rate at which you burn kilojoules) which is significant because our metabolic rate can decrease by about 10% per decade. In addition, when losing weight, we lose both fat and muscle – so it's even more important to include weight training

if decreasing your food intake – to save your muscle mass, metabolism and become strong and more toned. High repetitions and low to moderate resistance is ideal to achieve this.

## MUSCLE TURNS TO FAT WHEN YOU STOP EXERCISING

**FALSE:** Fat and muscle are two completely separate substances and one can't turn into the other. However, when someone stops exercising, their muscles shrink and become soft and flabby rather than firm and tight. In addition, when you are less

active, you tend to increase your body fat all over, so you will generally be more soft and floppy as well. The best way to prevent this is to stay active.

## WALKING IS JUST AS GOOD AS JOGGING FOR LOSING KILOS

**TRUE:** Brisk walking can burn as many kilojoules as slow jogging. In fact, brisk walking burns about the same number of kilojoules per kilometre as slow jogging – but it obviously takes longer to cover the same distance if you walk. Walking is also kinder to joints as it's low-impact so, if you're overweight, have a pre-existing condition or injury, it's definitely the safer option.

## YOU NEED TO EXERCISE FOR 20 MINS BEFORE YOU START TO BURN FAT

**FALSE:** The beautiful thing about exercise is that everything you do matters as any movement is better than no movement. The point at which we burn fat depends on the activity we are doing and also on individual factors. Genetics can play a role here – I'm sure you know some people that can just look at a donut and put on 5kg and then there are others who seem to be able to eat endlessly. Also, by becoming fitter we get better at burning fat so the best thing to do is any exercise at all.

## YOU CAN REACH YOUR WEIGHT-LOSS GOALS THROUGH EXERCISE ALONE

**FALSE:** Research shows time and again the high importance of combining both exercise and diet when trying to lose or maintain weight. It doesn't matter how much exercise you do, you still need to complement it with healthy eating if you want to be successful at losing weight and keeping it off for good. Also, you want to avoid eating more just because you are exercising more. For these reasons, it's best to attempt a weight-loss plan in which food and exercise go hand in hand.

## INTERVAL TRAINING CAN HELP YOU BURN FAT FASTER

**TRUE:** Interval training is when you alternate shorter bursts of high intensity exercise with slightly longer periods of lower intensity exercise. The benefit is that you can burn more body fat this way compared to when you exercise at a constant, steady pace. Researchers have found that during the intense bursts of interval training, the body produces a chemical reaction that burns more fat. So by alternating the pace of your exercise, you'll not only add some all-important variety to your workouts, but also get some great results.

## STEP MACHINES & BIKES CAN INCREASE THE SIZE OF YOUR BUTT & THIGHS

**FALSE:** Although it's a lower body exercise, riding a bike and/or using a stepping machine, is an endurance-based activity, not a strength-based one. Therefore,

endurance training predominantly uses muscle fibres that are referred to as slow-twitch and cannot grow bigger, unlike lifting very heavy weights. This is strength-based and you recruit fast-twitch fibres that can grow in size. Therefore, endurance based-activities such as the stepper and bike are ideal for toning, not building muscle.

## USING ANKLE OR WRIST WEIGHTS WON'T HELP YOU SLIM DOWN

**TRUE:** There are many types of ankle and wrist weight options available but it's probably best to save your money. Firstly, research shows they do not tend to be heavy enough to produce any significant strength benefit. And secondly, they can actually decrease your energy expenditure by slowing you down and reducing your stride length and/or arm swing. Interfering with your natural walking gait can also increase your potential for injuries so, best to just get out there and simply walk.

## THERE'S NO NEED TO STRETCH BEFORE EXERCISE

**TRUE:** It's always best to stretch a warm muscle – so avoid stretching *before* a workout if your muscles are cold. Stretching *after* a workout is best if you want to prevent injury and actually improve flexibility. The ideal type of stretching is the static method, when you stretch to the point of resistance (mild discomfort, but no pain) and hold it still for 10 to 30 seconds, repeating the stretch 3 to 4 times. [www](http://www.weightwatchers.com.au)