

6 FITNESS FALSEHOODS, BUSTED

Are old wives' tales influencing your exercise life? Here, experts debunk a half-dozen workout myths.

{ FITNESS }

"It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble," says an old quip that's been attributed to Mark Twain and various other 19th-century humorists. "It's what you know for sure that just ain't so." Is that you when it comes to workouts?

Myths about exercise tend to live rent-free in the heads of many of us, and even if at our best we know better, we may be semi-consciously letting them guide us. So BERGEN asked a pair of Bergen County exercise experts to tackle six common beliefs that have the drawback of being, well, false. Let the truth set you free! (The rest is up to you.)

MYTH #1:

"No pain, no gain." Most fitness experts agree on the foolishness of this old saying. Pain is an inflammation response that means your body is trying to heal an injury. And yes, to some extent it's injury—damage to muscle fibers—that causes the soreness you feel the day after you exercise. "Soreness is perfectly normal and can kick in anywhere between 24 and 48 hours after a workout and last a few days," says Joe Yang, fitness director at Q Performance Training Center in Hasbrouck Heights. "But sharp pain that stops you dead in your tracks is not OK." He adds that a proper warmup can help prevent painful workouts, and adjusting your workout regimen to what works for your body could help minimize pain too. If pain persists for two or more weeks, it's time to see a doctor.

MYTH #2:

"Exercise can help you spot-reduce." Men want six-pack abs. Women want thinner thighs. Many people think that by focusing on their problem areas, they can ensure rapid results. They're wrong. "All these so-called problem areas need muscular development," says Moshe Klyman, president and trainer at Underground Training in Tenafly. "Focus on strengthening workouts that increase your metabolic rate." He adds that "general weight

management is determined by a caloric surplus versus a caloric deficit"—meaning that the goal is to burn more calories than you consume—and it's a whole-body approach that requires more than just focusing on one particular area that you think needs improvement.

MYTH #3:

"It's important to work out early in the morning before you eat." Many people start their day with a trip to the gym or an at-home session, but time of day is not vital in the scheme of things. "Whatever time of day you can consistently get to the gym and crush your workout is the optimal time of day for you," says Yang. If you do work out in the morning, though, make sure you're well-fueled beforehand. "A high-intensity workout requires higher carb consumption prior to the activity than a light cardio workout would," he says.

MYTH #4:

"You must work out every day." If you want to work out every day, our experts say that's totally fine as long as you do different types of workouts on different days, and have a personal trainer helping you develop your individual program. But you certainly don't need to hit the gym seven days a week. "Rest days should be used to promote recovery and to help prevent fitness fatigue,"

Yang advises. "Ask yourself, 'how is my program set up so that I can optimize both the gym and everything else I enjoy doing in life?'"

MYTH #5:

"Lifting weights bulks up women too much." To build visible muscle, you need two things: lots of calories and lots of testosterone. Females typically don't have enough of either. So, unless they're taking testosterone supplements and consuming 3,000 calories a day, women simply cannot build muscle mass the way men can. "Of course, biological and physiological factors go into it, but for the most part, if you are not actively eating to bulk up, you won't bulk up," says Yang. Exercise, particularly cardio training, will help both men and women work off excess fat, which makes the muscles you already have more visible. Strength training such as lifting weights will add tone and definition.

MYTH #6:

"Exercise is a bore." This is the myth with a kernel of truth. If you do exactly the same things every time you work out, it can indeed become monotonous. But you don't necessarily need to overhaul your entire routine every few weeks to stave off exercise ennui, says Klyman. It can help to simply change up the variables such as "frequency of exercises, weight/loads, rest times and tempos." Keep your workout interesting by checking out the machines you haven't used yet, signing up for a personal training session to get fresh ideas or trying a cycling class. Suggests Klyman: "Do whatever you feel like doing and just have fun with it!"