

Female Training Myths

As a personal trainer, I have been approached many times by clients or other women in the gym asking me questions on the best ways to "tone up, lose cellulite, get a butt that 'sticks out', get a sexy stomach..." the list goes on.

My answers are always the same. There is no magic pill or powder or even secret that trainers, professional athletes or fitness models are keeping from the general public. It all comes down to hard work, being conscious of your diet and most importantly being consistent.

If it were easy everyone would be in perfect shape all of the time. To quote Bill Cosby,

"In order to succeed, the desire for success must be greater than the fear of failure."

The fear of failure is something I encounter 90% of the time when discussing fitness goals with women.

Whether they realize it or not, many women prevent themselves from achieving their fitness goals because of an inherent fear of failure. Unless you determine that you are going to make sacrifices and make fitness a lifestyle it becomes all too easy to 'give up' because 'it's not going to happen - I have bad genetics.'

Stop blaming your parents for your own fear of committing to yourself and your fitness goals. While it is true that some are genetically predisposed to developing lean muscle it is completely possible to train hard and diet to create the best body you can have for you. You will never know until you put all of your doubts aside and make it happen. Now, combine this fear of failure with the many myths that surround women and weight training and you have a recipe for disaster.

I am breaking down the six most common myths many women believe and thus hinder their progress or potential gains. Hopefully this will help educate more women to the truth behind what makes the body effectively transform.

Six Common Myths

Myth 1: Lifting Weight Will Make/Build/Develop Muscle Like A Man

We have all heard this one from some woman at one time or another. Ladies, no - lifting weight will not make you develop muscle like a man. Quick lesson in anatomy:

Both men and women have hormones coursing through their bodies. These hormones are testosterone, estrogen, progesterone and DHEA. For those of you who are not aware, men and women share all of these; however men have a much higher number of testosterone and DHEA than women do and women have a much higher concentration of estrogen and progesterone.

Testosterone is a very powerful hormone, this is one (if not the) primary factor that enables men to build muscle the way they do. Are there women in this world who lift weights and look like men? Yes. Why? They take testosterone or other androgens to help

them achieve that look. Does the average woman who wants to get in shape and attain a 'sexy' body have to supplement this way to achieve her goals? NO.

And, in all honesty, most women that attend the gym to get in shape or look good at the beach do not lift weights that are nearly heavy enough to develop in this manner.

Myth 2: Eating A Lot Will Make Me Fat.

Eating a lot of cake and candy and cookies will absolutely make you fat. So can eating a lot of pasta or chicken or bananas. There isn't any one type of food that can be blamed for unwanted fat gain in the body. What needs to be understood is that every morsel of food that is ingested has calories (many also contain vital nutrients).

However, if you overeat anything at any point during the day the excess that your body does not need will be stored as fat.

When a bodybuilder or fitness model, professional athlete or personal trainer stresses they eat frequently throughout the day they are not saying they eat "too much." Eating small meals 6 - 7 times a day will increase your metabolism so your body is constantly burning calories and is constantly receiving the adequate nutrition it needs to maintain all bodily functions including building and maintaining muscle.

Myth 3: Carbs Are The Enemy!

Ladies, forget Dr. Atkins please! In fact, try to stay away from all the fad diets on the shelves at Barnes & Nobles that promise to give you a bikini-perfect body if you do ridiculous things like stand on your head and eat nothing but Oreos.

There is no secret trick and no magic in a bottle. Cutting carbs and eating nothing but steak and bacon are not going to get you closer to having a firm butt and thighs. Sorry, but that's the truth. The Atkins diet and calorie restriction diets are excellent starting points for obese individuals that need to lose weight quickly for health reasons. They are not conducive to building muscle.

The macronutrients needed for a well rounded nutritional program are carbs, protein and fat. All three of these are necessary and have important functions within the body. I am not going to go into complete detail here as a complete breakdown of macronutrients and their function is extremely lengthy and would be better suited in an article on nutrition which I will write at another time.

The basic reasons are carbohydrates are necessary in rebuilding muscle. They are also an excellent source of energy within the body. This is not just energy to run five miles, this also means energy required to keep your heart beating, maintain the digestive process and even ensure cellular respiration can occur. (Fancy terminology that means your body does much more than what you make it or ask it to do.)

Myth 4: Working Out Turns Fat Into Muscle.

No, working out does not turn fat into muscle. Nor can you change apples into oranges by juggling. Think about it, muscle and fat are two completely different things. Fat is made up of triglycerides and muscle is made up of amino acids. How can one turn into the other?

The reality is that building muscle will in turn help you burn fat. The more muscle developed the more calories the body will burn even while at rest. The transformation will not occur over night - it can take months or even years.

Likewise the theory that 1 lb. of muscle weighs more than a 1 lb. of fat holds absolutely no water. 1 lb equals 1 lb no matter what that pound is made up of. However, muscle takes up less space within the body than fat does. Because of this someone who is extremely muscular but the same height and appears to have the same amount of body mass as an individual that has a softer physique can weigh more.

Myth 5: Drinking Too Much Water Will Make Me Bloat.

Actually the opposite is true. Not drinking enough water can make you bloat. Women are especially vulnerable to this. If an adequate amount of water is not consumed during the day the body will actually hold onto whatever water it has stored in the muscles in an effort to maintain necessary hydration for metabolism and other bodily functions.

This can give you a bloated appearance. I say women are especially vulnerable to this because of the high fluctuations we experience with hormonal levels (and yes, that 'time of the month'). These factors make our bodies more sensitive to maintaining adequate hydration so it is necessary to drink at least a gallon of water a day. (The exact amount of water necessary for an individual will vary depending upon the sport / activity she is involved with as well as her weight etc. This is another performance nutrition factor that will be addressed another time.)

Myth 6: I Don't Want To Train At The Gym Because People Will Look At Me.

Many women have said this during the years that I've been weight training. There is a common misconception that you must be blonde, busty, and extremely fit before you can walk in a gym and weight train. This is not the case.

To be honest, most people are not looking around the gym gawking at other people while they are working out. They are too focused on their own form, staring at themselves in the countless mirrors scrutinizing their own bodies and what needs to be improved.

Nobody is going to notice you in your sweats pushing through your personal workout. They are too focused on themselves. Don't get me wrong, there are some people at the gym who are social butterflies and like to walk around and talk to everyone but nobody is judging you.