

Crave Control

Q: why, when I am going to the gym or attending classes am I not losing any weight?

A: We exercise for many reasons, but one of the most popular ones is to try and lose excess body fat. You need an approximate deficit of 3500 calories to burn 1lb of fat. It may sound a lot but break it into a daily allowance and aim to burn 500 calories more than you eat each day to be on target to lose 1lb per week. Slow and steady weight loss is always advisable as research shows if you do it gradually it is more likely to stay off.

Calorie counting though is only half of the story, your body is a complex machine and it will try to compensate for an attempt to reduce energy stores. You may try to reduce energy either by exercising more or eating less, but every body will respond differently. That is why for some people exercise may increase your appetite and the result is you raiding the cupboards after your workout. Sound familiar? This is your body trying to regain some of the energy you have expended.

If you find that exercise does not stimulate appetite you may be one of the lucky ones but there are other psychological processes that we should also be aware of. This is called cognitive calorie compensation, which means exercises may allow themselves eat more as a reward for being active. People have also shown to be less active everywhere else, just because they feel they have done enough activity at the gym, so in effect you are energy compensating. Research shows us that people tend to underestimate food intake, and significantly overestimate their level of physical activity.

So what can we do about it? If you start exercising to lose body fat, also start monitoring your hunger-fullness levels as well as monitoring on a scale of 1-10 of how hard you are working. This will help you deal with hunger cravings that will be the downfall of your fat loss success, and also to assess if you are getting the most out of each exercise session. The main aim is that we don't cancel out the calories you have burnt, so do you bit at the gym/class and a bit more. Don't just allow yourself that treat (chocolate or whatever) just because you have done a workout. Wait until you really deserve it, like when you drop a few inches round your waist and then treat yourself to a new outfit. You know it will be worth it!!!

Forward this onto anyone who you think may find it helpful. Keep the feedback and more of your questions coming.

Until next time keep happy and healthy

Emma xx

Ref:

Matt O'Neill, Crave control, Fitpro Magazine, Feb/March 2008.

Email me with your questions
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