

Focus on Calories In versus Calories Out if Your Goal is Weight Loss (Exercise: Grade of C- for Weight Loss and A+ for Health)



SUMMARY: I stress that even though exercise is so good for you it does not do a great job at helping people lose weight. Maybe a little, but I must say not impressive. I grade it a C- for weight loss. It helps with fat loss and muscle gain though, which are both great for your health. **READ ON FOR MORE DETAILS**

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I always stress to my clients if you want to see the scale budge you have to follow a sound diet. One that you can sustain the rest of your life. I stress that even though exercise is so good for you it does not do a great job at helping people lose weight. Maybe a little, but I must say not impressive. It does do a great job at having people lose body fat though. Both aerobic and muscular training has been shown to decrease body fat, especially the unhealthy visceral (abdominal) fat, but at the same time it build and preserves muscle mass, which is one of the reason the scale does not go down that fast when you exercise (gain muscle as you lose fat). Another reason why people, especially women, do not lose weight when they exercise is that people tend to eat more. One 2009 study showed that people **increased their food intake (see study)** after exercise because they thought they burned off a lot of calories and they deserved it or because they were hungrier. Another **review of studies** from 2012 found people generally overestimated how much energy exercise burned and ate more when they worked out thinking they could. There is also the possibility of the "constrained model" of energy expenditure, which shows that the effect of more physical activity on the human body is not linear. The body may have a sets limit on how much energy it is willing to expend, regardless of how active you are, where the our bodies may actively fight our efforts to lose weight. Ok before I get you not to exercise the good news is that if you've lost weight, exercise can also help **weight maintenance (see weight loss registry)** when it's used along with watching calorie intake (**see Weight Loss Registry**).

A **Cochrane Review** of the best available research found that while exercise led to only modest weight loss, study participants who exercised more (even without changing their diets) saw a range of health benefits, including reducing their blood pressure and triglycerides in their blood. Exercise reduces the risk of **Type 2 diabetes**, stroke, and heart attack.