

WORDS AMBER BRYAN

FITNESS

Fact *vs* Fiction

Is it time to rework your workout? Cambridge-based personal trainer Amber Bryan busts some fitness myths to help you get the most out of your exercise regime



INSET IMAGE
Amber Bryan runs local personal training company, Love Fit Training



I **JOINED A GYM**, but I just wasn't getting the results." Sound familiar? That's the answer I hear time and time again when I ask a prospective new client why they've sought out a personal trainer. Up and down the country there are people dutifully making the most of their gym membership, turning up three times a week and slogging it out for an hour. Typically they persevere for a few months and then give up because they're not losing weight or changing shape as they'd hoped.

There are three main mistakes people make when training solo: too much steady state cardio, over-training (yes, really!), and a lack of variety, which leads to boredom. A lot of people quite simply don't know what they should be doing when it comes to exercising. Ask your average recreational exerciser what their regime consists of and they'll probably say jogging or, if they're a gym-goer, they'll go from cardio machine to cardio machine and then do a few crunches at the end of their session. Whilst doing steady state cardio is by no means bad for you, it's certainly not an effective way of training. A common misconception is that 'cardio' burns fat when, in fact, plodding along steadily for 30 minutes will be of little benefit. Don't panic though, once you know a few facts it's easy enough to create a time-efficient, effective workout. Here's my breakdown of the biggest fitness myths and how to avoid them.



Often people simply don't know what they should be doing when it comes to exercising”

Fiction

Steady paced, aerobic exercise = training in the 'fat burning' zone

Fact

To burn fat you need to work anaerobically, so...

DO INTERVAL TRAINING: Intervals are short bursts of intense exercise, followed by a recovery period. For example, sprinting for 20 seconds then walking for 60 seconds, and repeating several times. When you alternate between high and low intensity you reduce the build-up of lactic acid which enables you to burn fat faster by using the body's short-term energy stores (in the form of glycogen). You will continue to burn calories and fat for longer after an intense workout in comparison with steady aerobic exercise, as your body has greater oxygen and calorie demands in order to bring you back to resting levels.



Fiction

Fat turns into muscle and vice versa

Fact

You need to reduce fat and gain muscle (that's denser than fat), so...

DO USE WEIGHTS: Lifting weights conjures up images of body builders and this can be off-putting, especially for women who fear they might 'bulk up'. The truth is that women do not have sufficient testosterone to gain manly muscles without a serious weightlifting regime – so fear not! Doing some moderate resistance work (two or three sets of 15 reps) three times a week will not only give you a more toned physique, but it will also increase your metabolism. Muscles are calorie hungry (i.e. they need calories to function, even when you're resting). So the more muscle you have, the higher your basal metabolic rate. It's also important to remember that muscle is much denser than fat, so your weight might not change that much initially, but you will lose inches and appear slimmer. ♦♦

Fiction

Doing crunches and sit-ups will give you a flat stomach

Fact

Reducing overall body fat will reveal your stomach muscles, so...

DO TOTAL BODY WORKOUTS: Exercises that recruit multiple muscles are functional and will work your core, even if you can't feel it. All the old favourites, such as squats, press-ups and 'burpees' can be done anywhere and without the use of equipment. Machine-based exercises which work isolated muscles do not engage your core and are not effective for weight loss. The best way to reduce body fat is to combine weight and interval training with a clean diet that eliminates processed food, caffeine, alcohol and sugar.



Variation is key to success and you can only progress by working harder than you used to”



IMAGE ABOVE Amber recommends exercises that work multiple muscle groups such as squats, press-ups and 'burpees'

Fiction

The longer I train, the better my results

Fact

Your body needs rest to reap the rewards of your workout, so...

DON'T WORK OUT EVERY SINGLE DAY:

Rest is just as important as exercise and nutrition when it comes to losing weight. A day off gives your body a chance to recuperate, as well as reducing the risk of injury and over-training. If you train too much you'll either end up with an injury and put yourself out of action, or you'll end up feeling disillusioned with exercise and give up on your efforts. Sleep is also hugely underrated. Sleep deprivation leads to hormonal imbalances that in turn impair your chances of losing weight. A lack of sleep increases cortisol levels and reduces leptin. Cortisol is associated with increased belly fat, and leptin triggers the 'I'm full' signal in your brain, so when leptin is low your body doesn't know when to stop eating. As such, sleep plays a huge role in weight loss.

Fiction

The most important thing is to establish an exercise routine

Fact

Variation is the key to getting results, so...

DON'T STICK WITH WHAT YOU KNOW:

The human body is very good at adapting. As soon as it gets used to something it becomes more efficient at doing it, and hence no longer needs to work hard to produce the same results. That's why you can only progress by working harder than you're used to. A gradual increase in workload will bring about fitness gains, but it's also important not to increase too quickly. Try a few different classes such as circuit training or spinning, throw in some interval training and – if you're a gym member – deviate from the programme they write for you when you join! Hiring a personal trainer, even just for a few sessions, can be a great way of introducing some fresh ideas to your workout. ●●

Follow these tips – you'll soon see results!

Always consult your GP before commencing an exercise programme. For more information on Love Fit Training, visit www.lovefittraining.co.uk

