

Eat less or exercise more?

A common question many people have when their weight loss results come to a standstill is “should I eat less or exercise more to keep losing weight?” The correct answer to this question is actually both – but not always at the same time. To give you an example from my personal workout program, I’ll typically run on the treadmill for about 4-6 weeks and then I’ll stop running and decrease the amount of food I eat.

As odd as this might sound, the reason why I stop the cardiovascular exercise after a period of time is to prevent my body from becoming too efficient at it. Any workout that is done over time becomes less effective because our body has the ability to adapt very quickly.

That means a 30 minute jog, for instance, may initially burn 200 calories when you first get started but only burn 150 calories after a few weeks because the body adapts and perceives the jog as less of a challenge.

In the event we continue our workout without making changes we have two choices. We can: a) continue working harder and harder to burn the same number of calories, or b) we can throw our body a curve ball by reducing the number of calories we eat and reducing or cutting cardiovascular exercise out completely.

Since we can only push ourselves so hard for so long, I always opt to switch to a decrease in calories to maintain my deficit. This not only gives me a mental break so I don’t feel like I’m training for an Olympic event, but it also give my body a chance to recover and recuperate so I don’t go overboard between my weight lifting and cardiovascular exercise.

An additional benefit of reducing or eliminating cardio for a period of time in favor of a decrease in calories (food), is that you can start the cycle over again after 4 – 6 weeks to

continue losing weight. The reason why this is possible is because the body “loses” some of its efficiency after an extended break.

If you’ve ever worked out for a period of time and then stopped for a few weeks, you probably realized the workout seemed more difficult when you got started again. This happened because your body was no longer being challenged, which eliminated the need for a higher level of efficiency.

Of course, you should never use cycling your exercise as an excuse to skip working out, because exercising your body is extremely important for other health reasons besides just losing weight. Instead, along with your reduction in calories, you should find other types of exercise or physical activity to take its place.

Some things you may want to try are weight lifting (my personal favorite), biking, hiking or you can even take up some kind of a sport. If you would like to experiment with cycling your exercise and reducing calories you can try the following:

Weeks 1 – 4: Calorie deficit + Cardiovascular exercise

Reduce your daily food intake to create a 250 calorie deficit and do 30 – 45 minutes of cardiovascular exercise (3) times weekly

Weeks 5 – 8: Calorie deficit + Weight lifting

Reduce your daily food intake to create a 350 calorie deficit and do 30 – 45 minutes of Weight lifting 3 -5 times weekly