

[IMAGE]

Take Control of Your Body

3 Keys to Losing Weight and Building Lean Muscle

By Dr. Jeffrey Tucker

As we get older, many of us lose touch with our inner child. We forget how to be in control and how to play. As kids, we had willpower; there was no way parents could get us to eat certain vegetables or tell us when to fall asleep. And time was not even an issue – we had lots of time to play. Now if we could just use some of that stubborn attitude and playfulness as adults to burn fat, lose weight and build lean muscle, we could stop searching for instant results and no-effort diets and exercises.

Another unfortunate consequence of aging is a tendency to gain fat around the waist. This often goes hand in hand with less effective metabolism. How can you counteract these normal effects of aging? Here's how to eat and train effectively as part of a priority system for losing weight and getting leaner the healthy way. Let's call it the three keys to taking control of your body.

1: Diet and Nutrition

girl eating fruits - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark There are lots of options here, and it's not just about creating a caloric deficit, as you'll see. It certainly helps to have a caloric deficit, but it's just as important to increase your intake of quality protein, good carbohydrates (especially vegetables), fiber, healthy essential fats and water. For the majority of my patients, the bottom line when it comes to getting leaner is eating less carbohydrates (less than 150 grams daily) and eating more protein. I also believe that if you want a body that functions at a high level and looks lean, you are going to need a multi-vitamin/minerals supplement, too.

Here's another suggestion: I continue to notice that patients who keep a food diary get better results. There is only one way to find out what you actually are eating: keep track of everything that goes into your mouth. Since calories come in liquid forms, such as fruit juices, alcohol, sodas etc., these can easily add up and derail a fat-loss effort quickly. So keep a journal and review it regularly with your doctor.

2: Resistance Training

The bulk of calories burned is determined by your *resting metabolic rate*, which is largely a function of how much muscle you have on your body and how hard it works. If you think you'll just bump up your cardio for a while to lose weight, think again. *You must* add activities that burn calories, promote or maintain muscle mass and elevate your metabolism. This means working every muscle group and training it hard.

Let me be perfectly clear: I am not talking about doing aerobics here. It's not about adding more walking, treadmill, running or bicycling. It's about adding weight training! Let's face it, muscle looks good on the body. Muscle is an active tissue that requires calories to maintain, and muscle burns calories when it is working. Resistance training can be done in such a way to make you stronger and leaner. Studies and experience show that people who weight train lose more fat than those who diet and perform long bouts of aerobics.

There are various ways to burn more calories when you exercise, including explosive exercise training, interval or circuit training, supersets, sprints, etc., some of which you may have heard of. These are all effective methods to burn more calories and increase what's called "Excess Post-exercise Oxygen Consumption (EPOC)," defined as the "recovery of metabolic rate back to pre-exercise levels." What this means is that, depending on whether you've performed a few minutes of light exercise or an hour of hard intervals, you'll burn calories hours after you've completed your workout - up to 38 hours, research suggests.

Step 3: High-Intensity Interval Training

Many of my patients perform steady-state running - two, three, four miles at a time, two to four days a week, 45-60 minutes at a time. Many think they are doing it for weight loss. When I show them the comparison between the calories being burned from diet alone, diet plus aerobics, and diet plus aerobics plus weight resistance, they quickly realize that incorporating all three tactics (diet / aerobic exercise / weight resistance training) will help them lose more fat than diet alone, aerobic exercise alone or even a combination of the two. After that, they're often willing to change it up to high-intensity interval training for 30 minutes at a time three to four days a week.

Choose your inner-child cardio method and begin by performing 15 seconds of a "sprint" (if you cannot maintain the sprint for the whole 15 seconds – back down so that you can) and rest for 30 seconds. Repeat

10 times or until you feel "done" – in other words, don't get sick performing this routine. After three to five sessions of this, it should begin to get easier.

When 15 seconds feels alright – bump it up to 20 seconds on and 30 seconds off for 10 cycles for three to five sessions. Then go to 30 seconds on and 30 seconds off for 10 cycles for three to five sessions. And then go to 30 seconds on 20 seconds off for six cycles (that's right, more work than rest – but lower volume) for three to five sessions. These three to five sessions are not consecutive. Be committed to perform the intervals two times per week with a day of rest between. Add in one 20-minute session of "moderate" cardio activity.

Do the math: an hour and a half a week of high-intensity training to hit the cardiovascular system well enough for leanness, versus old-school running or cycling for 2-3 hours per week. Sounds like an easy choice to me.

A Sample Workout: 8 Exercises to Burn Fat and Build Lean Muscle

man with belly - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Here's a sample program that actually trains the entire body; every muscle group gets trained hard, frequently and with an intensity that creates a large metabolic push, helping you burn fat and develop lean muscle. That's healthy weight loss in a nutshell. I teach my patients weight-loss programs that start with body-weight circuits and band exercises, and progress to using free weights and kettlebells with heavy weight – enough weight to really stress the muscles (a weight you can lift for five reps, but seven reps is considered heavy/difficult).

To get you started, do each of the following body-weight exercises for one minute, and go from move to move without any rest. For weighted exercises, select a weight you can lift 5-7 times. Allotted time: 30 minutes. That means once you complete the following circuit, start it again until you have exercised for 30 minutes total.

Prisoner squat: *Strengthens the quadriceps, gluteals and trunk muscles and helps strengthen the legs for running.* Place your fingers on the back of your head and pull your elbows and shoulders back. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Lower your body as far as you can, pause, and return to the starting position. That's 1 rep. *Repeat for 60 seconds.*

Push-ups: *Strengthen your pecs (chest), triceps and abdominals.* Assume a push-up position, with your hands slightly beyond shoulder-width apart; feet together, and body in a straight line from head to ankles. Lower your chest until it's an inch above the floor, and then push back up. That's 1 rep. *Repeat for 60 seconds.* If you get tired, hold the "up" position in a plank pose until your time is up.

Mountain climbers: *Strengthen your arms, abdominals, and hip flexors.* Kneel on all fours with your hands in line with, but slightly wider than your shoulders. Straighten your left leg completely and lift your right knee toward your chest. You should be on the balls of your feet, positioned like a sprinter in the starting blocks. Now quickly *switch leg positions as many times as you can for 60 seconds.*

Reverse lunge with one-arm press: *Strengthens your arms and legs.* Stand holding a pair of dumbbells next to your shoulders; Step back with your right leg and press the dumbbell in your right hand straight above your shoulder; Lower it and stand back up; Repeat with your left side. That's 1 rep. *Perform 5-7 reps.*

Step-up: *Strengthens the quadriceps, gluteals and hip muscles. This increases both leg strength and stability.* Start with a dowel or barbell across your back, with one foot on a step or bench, high enough to ensure your knees and hips are bent at an angle of around 90. Push down through the heel of the foot upon the step and extend the leg, rising up onto the step. Then lower down, taking all the weight back onto the same leg, leaving the foot on the step. When the support leg touches down behind the step, begin to push up again. In this way, most of the work is done with the leg on the step. Start by mastering the technique with seven reps per side, progressing to holding a pair of dumbbells in each hand. Then progress to holding a kettlebell in one hand at a time. *Aim to increase the weight you can lift for 7 reps.*

girl lifting weights - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **Inverted row:** *Strengthens the upper back and arms.* Lie underneath a secured bar. Grab the bar with an overhand, shoulder-width grip, your arms and body completely straight, and heels on the floor. Pull your body up, and return to the starting position. That's 1 rep. *Repeat for 60 seconds.* If you get tired, hold onto the bar with as much of your body off the floor as possible until your time is up.

Up-chop kneel: *Develops excellent core stability and trunk rotation strength.* Kneel with a band or tubing handle attached below hip height. Grasp the handle in both hands to the side of the hip nearest the band. Lift the arms up and at the same time, rotate the shoulders away from the anchor, keeping hips facing forward and arms straight. *Complete 7 reps on each side.*

Down-chop kneel: *Develops excellent core stability and trunk rotation strength.* The down-chop is the opposite of the up-chop. Begin with the handle attached above head height, grasping the handle in both hands above the head to the side of the band. Keeping the hips facing front and the arms straight, pull the hands down and turn the shoulders away from the band. *Complete 7 reps on each side.*

Do you want to lose at least two pant sizes? Can you commit to everything I've discussed in a 14 -16 week or so progression, which will leave you in better shape and lower in body fat (if you get your diet in line)? Talk to your doctor about the exercise suggestions I've outlined and keep them in the loop as you make progress, or anytime you have questions. Now go take control of your body and take the (three) most important steps toward a lighter, leaner you!

A Winning Formula:

Nutrition + Resistance Training + Interval Training = Weight Loss

girl with small waist - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark It's a simple formula for weight-loss success: 1) Get your nutrition in order. 2) Use heavier resistance (not light and easy weights). 3) Keep the reps going so that the time under tension is about 60 seconds. 4) Keep the rest periods between sets very short, if at all. 5) Use mini-circuits to maximize the work intensity. 6) Use sprints. Do this and you will elevate what's known as your "Excess Post-exercise Oxygen Consumption" (EPOC) for up to 38 hours following a workout. That means if you trained from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. on Monday morning, guess what? You're still burning calories (without training) at midnight on Tuesday. Can you tell me if *your* training session can keep you burning more calories after the exercise session? If you haven't changed your program since the personal trainer at the gym showed you around the gym, it probably isn't.

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