

[IMAGE]

Blast the Fat!

By Chelsea Cooper, MPA, CPT

The question of how to burn fat effectively – the right way – has been posed for decades. Over that time, it's been answered many different ways. I am going to assume that you are trying to burn fat so you can lose weight. Let's look at how the body burns fat and calories effectively, as well as address a few myths or assumptions about burning fat. Then I will recommend a few fun exercises to help you burn those calories.

In order to lose weight, you need to burn more calories than your body consumes and uses on a daily basis, pure and simple. Exercise is one of the main ways to burn fat calories. When it comes to weight loss, keep in mind that what counts is how many total calories are burned, not necessarily where the calories come from. To lose weight, you have to burn calories.

A popular myth is that there is a specific range of heart rates in which you must exercise to burn fat. Even many cardio machines have a "fat-burning zone" on their panels, which encourage people to exercise in their specific heart rate zone. Have you ever wondered if you really have to exercise in a specific heart rate zone to lose fat?

Since more fat is used at low exercise intensities, people often assume that low-intensity exercise is best for burning fat, an idea that has given birth to the "fat-burning zone."

Below is a chart that gives you an example of calories burned, fat-burning percentage and calories burned from fat. You choose which exercise you think would benefit you the most in weight loss.

| Activity | Calories Burned | Fat-Burning Percentage | Calories from Fat |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Watching TV for 20 min. | 40 calories | 60 percent | 24 calories |
| Walking for 20 min. | 100 calories | 65 percent | 65 calories |
| Jogging & sprinting for 20 min | 250 calories | 40 percent | 100 calories |

I am assuming that you picked jogging or sprinting even though it has the lowest fat percentage, but the calories burned are the highest. And that's what matters most when you are trying to lose weight. Which of the three exercises would get your heart rate up? Yes, it would be the jogging or sprinting, but according to the "fat burning zone" it would probably keep you walking for 20 minutes.

So the popular myth about staying in your "fat burning" zone is just that – a myth. If I watched television my fat percentage was 60 percent but I only burned 40 calories total compared to jogging or sprinting where I burned 250 calories although my fat percentage was only 40 percent.

Your body is similar to your car. You put fuel in your car so that it will take you to your destination. Your body does the same, but it uses a few different types of fuel. It can burn sugar (carbs), it can burn fat, and if it doesn't have any excess sugar or fat, it can actually burn muscle tissue (which we want to minimize as much as possible). How much you burn of either type of fuel depends on your exercise methods and habits such as what you eat before you head to the gym. For now, let's focus mainly on different exercises that will help you burn fat. But know that your eating habits have a direct effect on fat burning or lack of.

A great way to burn fat and lots of calories is through interval (circuit) training. Interval training breaks up the work with periods of rest. Not only does interval training allow you to improve your fitness quickly; it is also more effective than continuous exercise for burning lots of calories during exercise and increasing your after workout metabolic rate. Studies have shown that "after burn" and interval training (circuit) can last up to 36 hours after. (This basically means you are still burning calories at a higher rate when you are finished than normal).

Here are some fantastic interval training exercises that will help you burn calories and lose weight:

Circuit/ Interval Training

Perform the exercises in these circuit routines consecutively (pick a routine) with as little rest as possible between exercises; then repeat the entire circuit 3-4 times with 30-45 seconds of rest in between if needed. You can also time yourself and try to improve your time each round.

Circuit #1

- 20 Push ups
- 20 Squats

- 20 Mountain climbers
- 20 Jumping Jack

Circuit 2

- 20 (10 per leg) Lunges
- 20 Siff Squat
- 20 Dips on chair or bench
- 30 Second run in place/high knees (repeat)

Circuit #3 Summer Fun Outdoor Workout

(Repeat 3-4 times) You can also time yourself and try and better your time each round

- 30 Bench Step ups - alternate legs
- 30 Push ups on bench
- 30 Dips on bench
- 30 Seconds skip/jog or sprint to a tree (or swings) and back. Repeat four times.

Circuit #4 Obstacle Course

(Repeat 3-4 times)

- Set out 2 cones (or some sort of markers) about 15 yards apart
- Run from cone to cone for 30 seconds
- Take a 5-second break
- Skip from cone to cone for 30 seconds
- Take a 5-minute break
- Shuffle side ways from cone to cone for 30 seconds
- End with plank hold for 30 seconds

Be creative if you have a soccer ball you can kick the ball, or basketball do lay ups for 30 seconds make it fun and challenging.

I didn't spend too much time on the wrong way because I want to teach you the right way to burn fat and lose weight. There is a science to this, but for fat and weight loss, what matters most is the difference

between the number of calories you expend and the number of calories consumed. It matters little whether the calories burned during exercise come from fat or carbohydrates. But you want to stay away from burning muscle because that helps with your metabolism. So try the workouts below and let's get fit now! Action is the difference between reaching our goals and just thinking about them.

How to Perform the Exercises

Bodyweight (BW) Squat

- Stand with your feet just greater than shoulder-width apart.
- Start the movement at the hip joint. Push your hips backward and "sit back into a chair". Make your hips go back as far as possible.
- Squat as deep as possible, but keep your low back tensed in a neutral position.
- Don't let your lower back become rounded.
- Push with your glutes, hamstrings, and quadriceps to return to the start position.

man doing push ups - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **Push-up**

- Keep the abs braced and body in a straight line from toes/knees to shoulders.
- Place the hands on the floor (or bench) slightly wider than shoulder-width apart.
- Slowly lower yourself down until you are an inch off the ground.
- Push through your chest, shoulders and triceps to return to the start position.
- Keep your body in a straight line at all times.

Mountain Climbers

- Brace your abs. Start in the top of the push-up position.
- Keep your abs braced, pick one foot up off the floor, and slowly bring your knee up to your chest. Do not let your hips sag or rotate.
- Keep your abs braced and slowly return your leg to the start position.
- Alternate sides until you complete all of the required repetitions.

Jumping Jacks

- Stand on the balls of your feet with your feet shoulder width-apart and arms by side.
- Jump your feet out to your sides and raise your hands overhead at the same time.

Plank

- Support your weight on your forearms and your toes.
- Keep your abs braced and breathe normally.
- Hold that position for 1 minute.

Lunge

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. You don't need dumbbells for this one.
- Step forward with one leg, taking a slightly larger than normal step.
- Press the front of your back foot into the ground and use it to help keep your balance. The back knee should also be bent.
- Contract your glutes, brace your abs and keep your spine in a neutral position.
- Lower your body until your front thigh is parallel to the ground.
- Keep your upper body upright and your lower back flat.
- Push up to the upright position, but don't step back. Stay in a split-squat stance.
- Perform all reps for one leg and then switch.

Run in Place/High Knees

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Run in place, driving your knees up as high as possible.
- Your other arm will naturally swing forward. Keep a bend in the elbow.
- Run in place at an interval pace.

Siff Squat

- Stand on the balls of your feet, with your feet just greater than shoulder-width apart.
- Stay on the balls of your feet for the entire exercise.
- Start the movement at the hip joint. Push your hips backward and "sit back into a chair". Make your hips go back as far as possible.

- Squat as deep as possible, but keep your low back tensed in a neutral position.
- Don't let your lower back become rounded.
- Push with your glutes, hamstrings, quads, and calves to return to the start

girl running - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **Dips**

- Find a low bench or a sturdy chair that will hold your weight.
 - Place your hands on either side of your hips so your palms are resting on the chair or bench your fingers are hanging over the edge.
 - Place your feet together firmly on the floor, as far in front of you as possible.
 - Tighten your abdominal muscles to prevent injuring your back during the exercise. Carefully move your backside off the bench leaving your hands in place. Keep your back straight and your head up.
 - Slowly lower your hips as far as your able, bending your elbows backward so your arms remain close to your sides. Then lift yourself up the starting position, using your arms.
 - Take care not to push yourself up with you legs. Don't sit back down on the bench until done with your repetitions.
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Ask The Trainer

Is it wise to do an intense cardio workout before you hit the weights?

Dear Reader,

This is a good question that I actually get asked a lot by my clients. But to answer it completely and thoroughly, I need to know what your goals are and what you are trying to accomplish; as well as how comfortable you are (from a safety standpoint) with lifting weights.

For example, if you are looking to lose weight and have a substantial amount of weight that you want to lose, and if you are new at weight-lifting, I would go with cardio first and then weight-lifting, because you will probably get more out of the cardio workout right now because you are new at weight-lifting. Now, when I say *cardio*, I'm talking about no more than 30 minutes with intervals (30 seconds of work, 1-minute rest). That is most effective. On the other hand, if you have 10-20 pounds to lose or are looking to get stronger and lean out, and you are confident in using weights, I would go with a good weight-lifting workout first. Whatever is left in the tank can be used to do cardio.

The reasons for this is because if you are doing a circuit training-type of workout (performing 4-5 exercises back-to-back with little to no rest), you are also getting in your cardio. This is called *cardio strength training*. Research has shown that cardio strength training can actually be more effective when trying to lose weight than long, slow cardio.

In the end, it does depend on your goals and experience. But keep in mind that if you are doing cardio and weight training back-to-back, then one of the two is going to be affected negatively (whichever you do last, when you're tired). One way to get around this is to do one in the morning and the other in the evening. You also can do them on separate days.

My recommendation would be to look into circuit training, interval training or cardio strength training. Any of these options takes less time and is very effective when trying to lose fat compared to traditional cardio.

-Chelsea Cooper, CPT

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