

[IMAGE]

Don't Get Weighed Down

More than 60% of Americans are now overweight or obese, with more women than men falling into this category. Being overweight increases a person's chances of developing numerous chronic conditions, including high blood pressure; heart disease; diabetes; stroke; and breast or colon cancer. Exercise and proper diet can both successfully help you combat weight gain.

A study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* focused on only one of these weapons against weight gain: exercise. For a one-year period, 173 overweight or obese women, ages 50 to 75, completed either an exercise or a stretching program. Exercisers completed moderate-intensity exercises, like walking or stationary biking, for an average of three hours per week, while women in the other group stretched once per week but didn't add exercise to their program.

Women who exercised lost several pounds over the year, while women who stretched actually gained weight. Although weight loss in exercisers was modest, fat loss was significant: Those who worked out at least three hours and 15 minutes each week cut their abdominal body fat by 7% and their total body fat by 4.2%, while the stretching-only women saw no significant changes in body fat. Predictably, the more exercise a woman completed, the more weight and body fat she lost.

Don't get weighed down by what your scale says. Even if exercising only helps you shed a few pounds, it is probably vastly improving your health while creating a leaner, fitter you. On top of looking better, working out will improve your cardiorespiratory fitness levels, which can reduce your risk for cardiovascular disease. Also, incorporating a healthy diet into your exercise program will yield much greater weight and fat reductions.

Reference:

Irwin ML, Yasui Y, et al. Effect of exercise on total and intra-abdominal body fat in postmenopausal women: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2003;289(3), pp. 323-330.

For more studies on the benefits of exercise, head to <http://www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/sports>.

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