



Effective Exercise: Eating for Success

By,

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We've heard the excuses before: "I'm just too busy to work out," "Diet and exercise doesn't work for me," "It's not my fault, it's my genetics," but the biggest excuse seems to be "I just don't have the motivation to exercise or lose weight." Too often health professionals deal with these and countless other reasons as to why their patients simply will not lose weight. So what can be done to reverse this trend? Why are people not responding to research-based proven methods for weight loss which involves eating a balanced diet and exercise? This article will address this issue by probing the problem and giving practical solutions to overcoming motivational barriers in addition to giving advice on how to make your workouts more efficient and effective.

The Problem: I don't want to do this!

Why? Many people do not like exercise because it is “intense,” “difficult,” or “just doesn't feel right...” Well, this is obvious: As the saying goes, “no pain, no gain” (or loss for that matter). We live in a society where if we want to watch TV, all we have to do is push a button. If we want food, we just need to pop a frozen meal in the microwave and in minutes, you have dinner. We have become so accustomed to an easier lifestyle due to technology that we have a mindset that we want fast results and things done the easy way. We all know that lifting 7 lb is far easier than lifting 10 lb. If you asked someone if they had a choice between lifting a 7 lb weight over a 10 lb weight, odds are, the majority of respondents will tell you they'd rather lift the 7 lb weight. So what does all this have to do with motivating someone to exercise? The answer: a lot!

Ok, so we know the problem...then what exactly is the solution!?

Whoa! Not so fast. Before a solution can be given, we need to understand what could be potentially causing this problem. First of all, let's get a basic rundown of food. Food as we all know is essentially one thing: energy! It provides these in units called calories (kcal) from 3 specific macronutrients called carbohydrates, lipids (fat), and proteins. (I'm sure we all know what sources of food provide these macronutrients so I'll spare the rundown and get to the fun stuff. To keep this article brief, I've decided to only get into the carbohydrate aspect of this and keep the science very basic. Although fats and

proteins play an important physiological role with respect to energy and motivation, carbohydrates are the main factor when it comes to exercise which is essential for long-lasting weight loss.)

Carbohydrates, when ingested are broken down by the body into simple sugars known as glucose. The timing of this can vary depending on the complexity of the carbohydrate. For instance, a slice of whole grain bread will take longer to digest than a slice of white bread. This is because the GI (glycemic index) for white bread is higher (its sugars are not as complexly bonded as the whole grain bread). This means the food gets absorbed faster. This glucose then enters the bloodstream and triggers a response by a hormone known as insulin which allows glucose to enter the cells of the body to perform energy-related tasks. So what does this mean? Well, to put it simply, if you consume a food that has more simple sugars in it, odds are that food is best suited for immediate energy usage (i.e.: a 30 minute workout). If you consume something with more complex sugars in it, that food is best suited for a longer sustained release of energy (i.e.: hiking).

Ok, so what does this have to do with what is causing the problem? Actually, quite a lot: Americans generally do not get a proper energy balance from the macronutrients they consume. The typical American diet consists of 45% calories from fat, 45% from carbohydrates, and 10% from protein; however, the average American should be consuming roughly 55-65% of their calories from carbohydrates, 15% from protein, and 20-30% from fat. Furthermore it seems evident with the advent of the low-carb craze: Atkins, and South Beach diets, many people have this misconception that carbohydrates cause weight gain! Actually the opposite is true! Carbohydrates give you a sense of satiety and are important in regulating blood sugar levels which plays a big role

with respect to your appetite! It is *how* you utilize these carbohydrates that will determine whether or not they will cause weight gain. How and why the myth started is another story. What is important is advocating Americans to consume more sugars in their diet depending on their *lifestyle*. Obviously, if you eat a candy bar and you sit on your butt, not only will that sugar probably be converted to fat, but you will also be hungry sooner than later because your blood sugar level will spike and then crash (negative feedback – homeostasis) and more than likely, repeating such actions will result in weight gain over time. It's all a matter of eating the right carbohydrates depending on what activities you have planned!

If we have more carbohydrates in our diet, we have more energy to do things! This gets back to the weights example I presented earlier. Suppose you went through a day where you ate a low carb diet vs. a day you ate a high carb diet. You will notice a difference in how heavy the weights feel. On the day where you consumed a low carb diet, the 7 lb weight will feel like the 10 lb weight and on the high carb diet, the 10 lb weight will feel like the 7 lb weight. Of course, this is just an example and is obviously assuming you have some idea of what the weights weighed before on a normal carbohydrate diet. The weights' heaviness is not absolute and could vary from person-to-person. The example, illustrates an important point; carbohydrates give you energy! If you tried working out on a day where you didn't consume a lot of carbs, you will notice it is very difficult, if not, impossible to get any quality exercise in. Aside from making you stronger, carbohydrates give you endurance for lasting activities, which, if we go back to our weight example, means, more carbs = more lifts = more calories burned. Furthermore, carbohydrates are essential for muscle building and as we all know, muscles

are the primary fat burning engines of our bodies! So we know that carbohydrates are important for strength and endurance, now where does the motivation factor come in? Can carbohydrates really give you the willpower to exercise and hence, lose weight? They sure can!

Most people, no matter the circumstances, do not want to engage in strenuous exercise, even if it is more efficient. Your body wants to accomplish tasks with as little energy as possible. If a person over-extends themselves when beginning a workout regimen, they will lose interest fast. The goal, simply put, is to maximize a workout with as little strain as possible. Carbohydrates do this by giving your muscles the energy they need to perform strenuous activity. Whether it's moving faster, doing more reps, or adding on heavier weights, carbohydrates are the key to creating an efficient semi-stress free workout environment. This in turn helps keep the desire to keep an exercise regimen high.

The Solution!

If you guessed supplementing your diet with more carbohydrates, you're right on track. This of course only applies if you do not get enough carbohydrates in your diet as is. However, although increasing carbohydrates is a big part of the equation, other things play a significant role in the motivation game of exercise as well. For instance, certain micronutrients and amino acids play an important role with energy metabolism and motivation. Also, certain dietary supplements have been known to increase energy and drive. There are just too many factors to mention. When you really get right down to it though, the biggest motivator needs to be yourself. You can eat all the carbohydrates in

the world, and still not exercise. There is no magic pill to make you exercise. It ultimately comes down to you wanting to make a positive change in your life and sticking to a routine. Supplementing your diet with a good balance of nutrient-rich macronutrients will help, but it can never replace your willpower to live healthier and feel better about yourself.

Author's Recommendations:

- Although energy supplements can help with exercise performance, the author discourages their use. Not only are these supplements expensive, but your body develops a resistance to them over time. Eventually, you become dependent on the supplements for energy. You'd be better off investing that money in good healthy food.
- When consuming simple sugar foods, try to reach for nutrient dense foods like fruits. Energy bars can also make a fine substitute.
- Start small: When exercising, don't expect to run a marathon your first day. A baby needs to learn to crawl before s/he can walk. The same applies for exercise. Your body needs to be conditioned for exercise. Take it easy.
- Never stop challenging yourself: Always seek to increase resistance with your exercise. This could be something as simple as running an additional 1 minute each day or running at a 1% higher incline on your treadmill over a week's span. When lifting weights, you might want to alternate between a heavier and lighter weight until you feel comfortable with the heavier weights. The great thing about

this is you can workout at a comfortable pace that doesn't really *feel* like it has changed in resistance despite it doing so.

- Don't stress if you miss a day or 2. It is not the end of the world! There will come times where you will not be able to workout some days. This is part of life. If you miss a day, you might want to repeat the same exercise you did last time instead of an increased intensity exercise.
- Again, try to get a good balance of macronutrients. Carbohydrates are key to an effective workout, but so too are fats and proteins; it's just a matter of moderation.
- Get enough sleep: Sleep is vital if you want to develop muscle which again, is one of our main fat-burning powerhouses. When you have a lack of sleep, you produce less growth hormone (GH) which is a hormone that helps burn fat and build lean muscle tissue. When there is a lack of sleep, other physiological processes cannot run at optimum which can cause a decreased desire to engage in physical or mental activities. Finally, recent studies have shown that when you get a lack of sleep, the expression of a hormone known as ghrelin which is a hormone associated with feelings of appetite increases and the expression of the hormone leptin, a hormone associated with feelings of satiety and has also has been shown to increase lipolysis (fat burning), decreases.
- Finally, take pride in knowing you are doing something good for your body. Be sure to congratulate yourself after each workout. By feeling good about yourself and exercise, you are setting up positive reinforcement for keeping a consistent exercise routine.

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