



FitBiz Watercooler Wellness

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GET AWAY FROM SPOT REDUCING! – It Doesn't Work That Way

Spot reducing is the oh-so-tempting belief that doing specific exercises will reduce the amount of fat over certain areas of the body. For example, doing leg lifts to reduce fat in the hips and thighs, or doing crunches with the goal of getting those six pack abs. As consumers we are guided by magazines, the internet, and even trainers with programs that target “muffin tops” with side bends, “spare tires” with lower abdominal crunches, and “saddlebags” with outer thigh exercises. However, targeting “trouble areas” through isolated exercises in lieu of a comprehensive training approach is just as ineffective as ever. The truth is that you cannot blast a specific body area with hundreds of repetitions and realize fat loss in only that area, as frustrating as that might be.

Fat in your body is like gas in your tank. Thinking you can reduce fat from your stomach alone is like saying you want to use gas only from the right side of your gas tank. Fat, just like gas in your car, is stored energy. It gets recruited equally from all over your body and sent to the muscles to be burned. To lose fat, you have to burn more calories than you eat. When you do that, you create a calorie deficit that causes your body to steal more energy from your cells -- hopefully the ones with all the fat in them. When that energy is taken, those cells get smaller and smaller, leading to a body with more muscle and less fat. Since the number of fat cells we have never decreases (they are determined in childhood and adolescence), they can only shrink or balloon depending on our habits.

So what DOES work?

Although spot reducing may be a myth and not the best use of your time, many methods can help you lose overall body fat and improve muscle tone.

- 1. Cardiovascular exercise:** Cardio, such as running and cycling, uses large muscle groups and has been proven effective at torching calories.
- 2. High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT):** HIIT involves short periods of intense activity immediately followed by a recovery period.
- 3. Whole-body exercises:** Instead of focusing on one area of the body, whole-body exercises like burpees have been shown to burn more calories and lead to more fat loss than targeted exercises such as bicep curls.
- 4. Combining exercises:** Combining resistance training and cardiovascular exercise has been shown to be more effective at shedding pounds than just focusing on one type of exercise.

