

## **“YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT”**

**By  
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One of the biggest misconceptions about taking on an exercise program is that you can eat whatever you want and still lose weight, as long as you are exercising everyday. NOT!! You are what you eat is not just a cliché. It is the absolute truth. If you eat a diet full of fat and sugar or you overeat, you will not lose weight. In addition, your body will not have the nutrition it needs to work up to par. All of your body's systems will be sluggish and unhealthy and you will constantly battle the bulge. Weight loss is possible with exercise alone, but it will be a slow process unless you change your diet to healthy, lean and nutritionally-balanced choices.

The amount of calories burned on the “average person's” workout is about 300 calories. If you exercise every day for 45 minutes at an average intensity level and you did not change your typical eating pattern, it would take about 12 days to lose one pound. That translates to about 2.5 pounds per month. For most people, who are trying to lose weight, that is just not quick enough. Its not a bad approach though, because you would not have to restrict your calories in your diet, therefore, it is a much more “doable” and comfortable effort, however more nutritious choices should be incorporated every day.

If you are under the impression that you can eat whatever you want because you are exercising, you are probably eating more than you did before you started the exercise program. You will either gain weight or stay the same because weight gain and weight loss are based on the simple principle “energy in versus energy out”. If you take in more calories than you expend, you will gain weight. The amount of calories you burn off with your exercise is minimal to the amount of calories you could over-consume in your diet. For example, if you were burning off 300 calories a day with your workout, but eating an extra donut for a morning snack, you would not lose any weight because the donut negates the workout. If you added a can of pepsi and a bag of popcorn at night (just because you think you can now that you are on an exercise program), in addition to the donut, you would be over-consuming calories by about 450 calories per day. At that rate, you would gain a pound every eight days. It is easy to see how you could gain five pounds in 1 ½ months.

It is true that, if you exercise hard and challenge your muscles with high resistance weight training, you can change your muscle cell physiology to increase your metabolic rate. In essence, your body will burn more calories at your resting state than it did before you started your exercise program. However, this change will only happen if you are consistent, you work out hard, and you challenge your muscles with a high resistance. This change takes time. It is not going to happen in one or two months. It can take six months to a year, depending on how out of shape you are. If you just go through the motions without putting out any effort, your muscles will only improve slightly and your weight loss will be minimal.

The best approach is to exercise and eat the appropriate amount of food. Try to cut down on your eating by about 300 calories per day (one donut; two cans of pop; second helping of lasagne; two beers; one candy bar; 3 TBS of dressing or mayo). The combination will burn off 600 calories per day. This translates to a more reasonable weight loss of one pound per week. That is doable and more permanent.