

Does exercise influence your appetite?

Other than talking about Angelina Jolie's upcoming wedding or who got eliminated from *Dancing with the Stars* or *American Idol*, I overheard a client saying, why do I feel like eating more when I exercise?

Most of us commit to a fitness program because we want to lose weight or maintain an ideal weight. Exercise is well known for its role in promoting health and preventing diseases but majority use exercise as a way to control our weight. On the other hand, it's not uncommon for people to take a daily run and have not lost a single pound or even add a few more pounds.

Will you eat less when you stop exercising? The answer is definitely no. If you're trying to lose weight, exercise alone without calorie restriction, may not help much.

From a biological standpoint, burning more calories through exercise would stimulate the appetite. Exercise increases appetite because the body burns calories as you exercise, and this stimulates appetite to make up for the expended calories, said James Fries, a professor at Stanford University. Our body works to equalize itself. For this reason, exercise not complemented by a healthy diet may not contribute to weight loss alone.

What effect does exercise have on our appetite levels? According to a study published in *Medicine & Science in Sports and Exercise*, for most people, exercise does not alter the total number of calories a person eats. Although most people don't feel like eating immediately after an intense workout, this doesn't seem to affect how much they eat over the entire day.

Immediately after a vigorous exercise, appetite decreases, probably because of a temporary rise in body temperature. But as soon as body temperature normalizes, appetite goes up. At this time, the body may also be burning more calories due to increased metabolic rate.

On the other hand, exercising in the cold has been shown to increase the amount of food eaten afterwards. The higher the intensity

and temperature, the longer your appetite will be suppressed.

What about the hormone factor? There are two chief hormones responsible for controlling appetite in the body. Ghrelin stimulates your appetite, causing you to feel hungry. Peptide YY is responsible for suppressing your appetite.

Exercise can affect both of these hormones, the *Science Daily* reports. The endocrine and cardiovascular systems of the body play a role in appetite suppression.

The hypothalamus, a gland in the brain, suppresses hunger and is triggered to release hormones when you exercise at a moderate to high intensity. These hormones are responsible for suppression of hunger.

What does this mean to the average exerciser?

Exercise provides accountability. It retrains our brain's happy pathways. Exercise, like food, is a mood enhancer; working out releases endorphins, those natural hormones which promote that "feel good" feeling. The more we workout, the less inclined we are to turn to food for the same high.

Exercise increases our need for hydration and water is a natural appetite suppressant. By drinking more fluid, we tend to feel fuller longer.

Often times when we think we are hungry, we are just dehydrated. Drinking water helps curb the desire to eat more and eat more frequently.

Another reason exercise helps inhibit hunger is that when you exercise the blood is taken from the stomach and sent throughout the body.

Regardless of how it affects your appetite, exercise can help you lose weight if you combine it with a healthy diet and stick to it or decrease your caloric intake when you are less active.

It's hard to say no to healthy living

I have been working out at Bench Gym for the last four years. Before starting training, I had never really worked out with weights before, and was very intimidated.

The trainers at Bench have really helped me become more confident in my ability to work out regularly, and pushed me to discover strength I did not know I had. These guys are really creative. Four years later, they still surprise me with new exercises that I have never done.

What sets Bench Gym apart from others is the friendly atmosphere that Jon and the other trainers work hard to create for the clients.



Henry Johnson