

4 Things Women Should Be Doing at the gym to change their body (and often aren't)

By Carmen Bott (taken from March 2011 Performance Advocate newsletter)

1. Lifting heavy weights

Yes ladies, throw away the pink dumbbells and opt for a load that challenges (and I mean really challenges you) for 6-8 reps. Tone is simply the appearance of 'hardness' in a muscle while at rest and the ONLY way to achieve real tone is through heavier lifting. If the volume is kept reasonable (3-6 sets) per exercise, the chances of gaining bulk through this type of training is slim. The media has been lying to women for years about going light with high reps as the answer to a hard body.

2. Skip the cardio machines

Yes, that's correct. Steady cardio sessions on the Elliptical trainer are for.....well I am not quite sure who. The calorie expenditure is nil and the demand on the body is so low that you might as well spend the day shopping and drinking coffee. The key is *interval training and moving your body against the earth's gravitational forces*, so activities such as circuit training, tire flipping, sled pushing, hill running are all much better choices. (this is why it is called work) Not only do they use more energy in LESS TIME, but the amount of energy you use after the training session is prolonged. Meaning, you will burn more calories doing nothing after a more intense, interval-based session of only 20 minutes versus a 90 minutes 'watch-the-paint-dry" session on the elliptical trainer or stationary bike.

3. Perform full-body workouts with load.

The more muscles you activate during an exercise, the more calories you burn. Period. And the really cool aspect of this principle is that, you actually burn even more calories when you become more proficient at an exercise. Take a deadlift for example. You could do 1000 of those Jane Fonda-like butt toning leg lifts without resistance for years on end and never see and change in your derrière, but if you picked up some weight using the deadlift for 4 x 5 reps, 2 days per week, not only would you target that derrière of your, but you will use more energy in doing so.

4. Stop Crunching

You will not (again, Shape magazine lies) tighten and whittle your waist by performing an endless variety of sit-ups, side twisty-things and crunches. And no, "More reps!" does not work either! To whittle the waist you need to make sure you are watching your diet (see a holistic nutritionist) first and foremost. Once that end of things is on track, in order to challenge the abdominals, you need to perform strength training. No, I am not talking about standing on a wobble board performing a lateral raise with tubing to quote: "Improve your core stability" (by the way, that is a lie too); I am talking about selecting an exercise that challenges your core whereby you must brace that area to keep your body stable and move weight. Crunches have also been proven to stress the spine and create muscle imbalances (McGill, all the time). Instead, spare your spine and strengthen your core by performing variations of the plank with high quality and maximal activation. Front squats and pull-ups are also excellent ways to integrate the core - yes, I know, you don't feel the burn. But, would you liek to see my abs 11 weeks post c-section? I rest my case.

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