

The Most Commonly Asked Health and Fitness Questions

Excerpted from *dotFIT Me—A Proven Fitness System Used by Millions Worldwide*

By Dr. Micheal Clark and Neal Spruce

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Through our decades of experience as health and fitness pioneers and experts we have discovered that people have a common list of questions, concerns and doubts concerning their health. This document serves as an overview of those popular issues. We hope you find it useful in connecting the dots to your health, nutrition and fitness. Of course, if you have questions not covered we encourage you to contact us at www.dotFIT.com or by phone. Our complete contact information is at the end of this document. Special thanks to Dr. Micheal Clark, Neal Spruce and all the experts at the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) and dotFIT for their knowledge and dedication to the cause.

What should I do if I get sidetracked?

Don't give up! As we mentioned earlier, sometimes we all fall down. That doesn't mean that all is lost! Refocus your energy and start again. Revisit your goals and determine where you may have encountered too large an obstacle to overcome. Once you have identified a "problem area," list the strategies you'll use to overcome that problem next time. Where there is a will, there is way! Be the problem solver!

Why are small, short goals better than larger ones?

Smaller goals aren't necessarily better; they are simply easier to attain, and you begin to gain confidence from reaching them. If your goals are set for too long in duration, you may lose track of them or they may seem too daunting. Small, short goals help you gain a sense of accomplishment and often inspire you to keep going when times are tough!

I never seem to reach my goal of weight loss. What will goal-setting do to help me lose weight?

Proper goal setting will help keep you on track and you can gain a sense of confidence and accomplishment. If ten pounds of weight loss is your goal, set the shorter goal of one pound per week. Every week you accomplish losing that one pound, reward yourself with something healthy like a new pair of running shoes, and congratulate yourself. Every time you achieve a small goal, you are on your way to the larger goal but you will gain confidence and a sense of pride in yourself along the way. Losing weight requires committing to exercise and proper nutrition and goal setting helps you keep that commitment.

How do I know if I am ready to achieve my weight loss goals?

Ask yourself why you wanted to pick up this book and read it. Ask yourself why you want to change. And then study your answer. Next, question your answer. Break down

your reasons to get to the very core of why you decided to change. When you can uncover the most significant reason as to why you want to change, most likely you will find your hidden motivation. The mental gymnastics will help you determine if you are ready to commit to a change. Your actions and attitude will keep you on track with reaching your goals, but when you truly know why you want to achieve something, it is easier to dedicate yourself to it!

Is it true that carbohydrates make a person fat?

Absolutely not! Eating more calories than you burn makes you fat, whether those calories come from carbohydrates, proteins, or fats. Any amount of food that you eat above the amount of calories you burn will be stored as fat.

American's waistlines have expanded simply because people eat about 250 more calories per day than they did a decade ago and they move less because of technology and lifestyle.

Remember, unless you're eating too much of it, a single food doesn't make you fat; excess calories make you fat.

Will eating fat make me fat?

Absolutely not! Eating more calories than you burn makes you fat, whether those calories come from carbohydrates, proteins, or fats.

Will eating past 7:00 p.m. result in weight gain?

No! In fact, you can have your last meal in bed if you want; just don't consume more calories than you burn for the day. By the way, a day is twenty-four hours, so who cares when you eat your calories?

The body does not have an enzyme that decides that after 7:00 p.m. it will store items, especially carbohydrates, as fat. Everyone has a certain number of calories they can consume without gaining weight. If you happen to change your daily schedule and end up eating a final meal or snack later in the evening without changing your calories, you are in no danger of accumulating weight as a result of that minor alteration. Ideally, however, you would spread your allotted number of calories throughout the day to prevent hunger and prevent wild fluctuations in blood sugar levels, which can sap your energy levels.

Does pasta make you fat?

Absolutely not! As we said on the previous page eating more calories than you burn makes you fat. It doesn't matter where those calories come from.

Does fruit or fructose make you fat?

No! Again, it's all about calories, calories, calories. Burn more calories than you take in and you will lose weight.

When attempting to lose fat, should I avoid fruit, wheat products, and/or dairy products?

No, but if you did avoid all of the above for any extended period, your diet would lack certain nutrients. Eating for fat loss or weight loss is confusing at best. The current, media-

driven methods include carbohydrate slashing and drastic caloric reduction, both leading to weight rebound.

Is excess protein stored as fat?

Only if your total calories (combination of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates) exceed your maintenance needs, at which point all foods thereafter will be stored as fat.

If I want to lose fat quickly, should I do as much cardio as possible?

Not unless you love it. Reducing calories, as opposed to burning the extra calories, is by far an easier method of reducing weight quickly. That said, do a little cardio for your health, and don't lose weight too quickly—it will come back.

Can I exercise every day?

You can do some form of exercise everyday; however, you need to rest for forty-eight hours between bouts of resistance training. Remember that resistance training breaks down muscle, requiring the body to repair it—and making it bigger and stronger. The body needs the time to repair the muscles in order for change to occur. However, you can do some form of activity everyday; again, NASM recommends one hour of activity per day, six to seven days per week. For instance, you can take a daily two-mile walk, or perform cardio sessions on the days in between resistance-training sessions. Be aware that although you may want to dive into exercise head first, listen to your body. If you are achy, starting to feel exhausted and easily fatigued, you might be overdoing it! Cut back your daily exercise and allow your body to rest.

Do I need to do resistance training to lose weight?

Technically, no, but we suggest that you incorporate it into your weight-loss strategy. As you have learned, if you can create an energy deficit (more energy out, less energy in), then you will lose weight. However, if you want to lose that weight more quickly and efficiently, and keep it off longer, then resistance training is for you! Muscles are fat-burning machines; the more muscle we have, the more calories we burn every day at rest. Resistance training helps build muscle, as well as increasing bone density, enhancing function, and creating a toned appearance. Why wouldn't you choose an exercise with so many pluses?

Can I lose weight in one specific area (spot-training)?

Unfortunately, no. We all have problem areas that have us cursing our genetics or wishing we hadn't eaten that second helping last night at dinner. The body dictates where it wants to burn fat first. Don't give up, though! While it may take more time, there is no limit to how much fat your body can burn; it's just energy. You will have to be strict with your nutrition and make sure that you keep your body in an energy deficit.

If I do resistance training, will I get big and bulky?

Maybe, but only if your genetics call for it, and usually only if you are a male. Men have a high level of the hormone testosterone, which creates large muscle growth. In contrast, women have low levels of testosterone and high levels of estrogen. A woman's biology does not allow her to grow very big muscles, unless she has help, but genetics may play

a factor. We all have different body types. Some of us are more athletically built, which may produce a more bulky appearance. Learning to resistance train correctly will develop a lean, balanced physique. Part 2 of this book will help you better understand the right resistance-training program for you.

Can I do the same workout for three months?

Yes, but you will not achieve optimum results. Your body will adapt to the demands placed on it and stop producing change. Performing the same routine will allow the body to become better at the movements and conserve energy. Remember, if you want to lose weight, you need to expend energy! Also, overuse injuries can occur if you train the same way for months. The body must maintain a balance to avoid faulty movement. Your program should change every four weeks to avoid a plateau.

Can I get ripped abs like I see on television?

Absolutely! We all have a six pack; often, it's just covered by fat. Keeping your nutrition in check, maintaining an energy deficit, and performing the right exercises to develop the muscle will all work to help you get a ripped-ab appearance.

Can I lose ten pounds in one week?

Yes, but not safely! If we are strictly talking about your weight as measured on the scale, then we can make you lose ten pounds — that is, if we dehydrate you. Your weight fluctuates every day. While we use the numbers on the scale as an objective measurement to show change in the body, it is our body composition that truly matters. You can lose only up to 2.2 pounds of fat per week (and that means being in a calorie deficit of 1,000 calories per day). Realistically, our bodies will lose one pound of fat per week, which means losing ten pounds will take about ten weeks.

When can I expect to see results from my fitness plan?

Right away! Expect to start feeling better, happier, and more energetic within the first week of starting an exercise plan. Strength gains will occur over the first two weeks of training as your body begins to realize that it needs to get stronger to handle the demands placed on it. As far as physical changes, it will take about four weeks to start to see the changes your body is making. You can lose four to eight pounds of body fat per month. This translates to better fitting clothes and a tighter overall feeling. You may even start seeing muscle popping through in different locations.

What is an acceptable Body Mass Index (BMI)?

Underweight	Normal	Overweight	Obese
18.5	18.5–24.9	25.0–29.9	> 30

After you have calculated your BMI, refer to the chart to determine where your BMI should fall. Remember that BMI is useful to know but it does not take into consideration your lean muscle mass. Use this assessment in conjunction with a body-fat test to give you a better indication of your overall health.

What should my resting heart rate be?

This is a great question! Resting heart rates will vary, but on average a good resting heart rate will range from fifty beats per minute to seventy beats per minute. This number will vary for those individuals on beta blockers or other heart medication. High-level athletes can have resting heart rates around forty beats per minute. Generally, if your resting heart rate is higher than seventy-five beats per minute you may need to contact your physician prior to engaging in an exercise program.

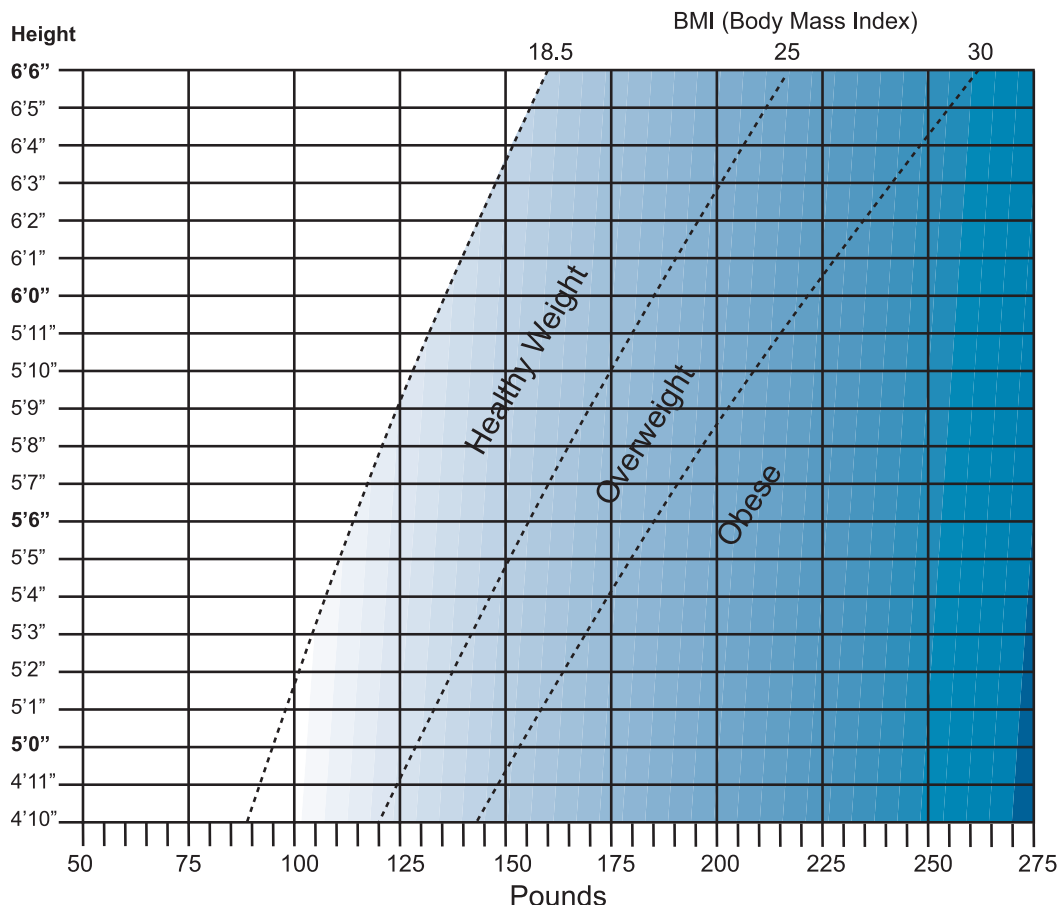
What if my heart rate is too high?

This can be a sign that you are out of shape or that you need to talk to your doctor before engaging in rigorous physical activity. It is always good to check with your physician prior to starting an exercise program and also get a full physical once per year.

What should I weigh?

What we tell our clients is, although we have norms for weight based on height, the amount of lean muscle you have will skew those numbers. Remember that muscle weighs more than fat. Which would you rather be: a one-hundred-ten-pound woman with thirty percent body fat, or a one-hundred-twenty-pound woman with eighteen percent body fat?

Following is a chart for weight norms based on height. *Find your height and weight and compare your numbers to those shown.*



Excerpt from the National Institutes of Health.
Measurements are taken without shoes and clothes.

I answered yes to some of the questions on my PAR-Q. Do I really need to see my doctor?

Please take the time to contact your physician. It is better to be safe than sorry! If there are any limitations on or contraindications to exercise, you need to know before you begin.

I want to get fit, but do I really need to do these assessments?

As we mentioned earlier, it is good to have a plan to achieve your goals and measure your successes. These assessments not only give you an idea of where you are starting, they also make you aware of your fitness levels. This helps you to stay safe while exercising, and may uncover potential problems or injuries down the road. We strongly recommend that you perform at least a cardiovascular assessment. The body-weight, circumference, and body-fat assessments are optional, but again, we recommend that you know your starting points so that you can celebrate your achievements as you work to reach your goals. What gets measured, gets done!

Should I stretch before I play a sport? I was told that it would decrease my performance.

This is a long-debated topic. Static stretching (one form of flexibility) will relax the muscle being stretched and could decrease performance if it is not performed correctly. However, remember that static stretching should be individualized (based on your movement assessment) and performed on muscles that are hyperactive or tight and might be inhibiting proper or enhanced movement. A common misconception is that static stretching is the only form of flexibility; it is actually only one of many forms of flexibility, including dynamic stretching. Before a game, use both forms of flexibility together. Static stretching can be done to inhibit areas that may be limiting proper movement, followed by dynamic stretching, which will raise core temperature, increase movement at the joints, and excite the nervous system (allowing the body ready to perform better). Flexibility is not all the same. Remember, the body needs balance. When done correctly, stretching can enhance your performance.

Will static stretching create long, lean muscles?

Unfortunately, no. Long, lean muscles are dependent upon your genetics. Long muscles are due to short tendons (the connectors of muscle to bone). If you are born with long tendons and short muscles, you will not be able to stretch your muscles beyond your muscles' length potential.

Can stretching decrease injury?

The jury is still out on this one! Using evidence-based research and clinical evidence, we have seen that a combination of flexibility techniques (foam rolling, static stretching, muscle activation, and dynamic stretching) can keep the body in alignment, creating the balance we mentioned earlier. When muscles are balanced around joints, joints can move optimally, keeping the movement chain intact. We have seen numerous professional athletes, recreational athletes, and gym-goers benefit from incorporating flexibility into their

workout routines. Just remember that flexibility (keeping muscles at their proper lengths) is one part of a program and must work with the proper strengthening techniques to make the most difference.

Is it true that I need to hold a stretch for one minute to get the most benefit?

When it comes to static stretching, a thirty-second hold is about as long as it takes to get the muscle being stretched to relax and lengthen a bit. However, the muscle being stretched should be statically stretched twice to get increased range of motion.

What is movement preparation, and is it really that important to my workout?

Movement prep helps keep the body moving free of injury by inhibiting overactive muscles, lengthening short muscles that may impede healthy joint movement, strengthening weak muscles that may allow for altered joint movement (which will alter the results of a program), and integrating dynamic movement to warm up the muscles and tissues while “lubing up” the joints. Movement preparation is a specific warm-up that can help you maximize your results. We think performing the right movement preparation is essential to any good exercise program.

Is it true that flyes help develop the “inner pecs?”

Unfortunately, no. In fact, there are no such thing as inner pecs. We have one pectoralis major muscle that runs from the middle of the chest to the upper arm, by the shoulder. This muscle has different muscle fibers that can be emphasized (e.g., you can emphasize the top muscle fibers by doing incline chest presses). However, when a muscle fiber is contracted, the whole fiber contracts. You can’t fire half a fiber, thanks to something called the All or Nothing Principle. Therefore, we can’t train the inner pecs by doing flyes. However, if you have been consistently doing bench presses or dumbbell presses and decided to change things by doing some flyes, the change may stimulate the muscle, potentially helping develop it more. It’s not the exercise itself that will make the difference, it’s the deviation from your normal routine.

How do I work my lower abs?

Similar to the answer we gave to the previous question, unfortunately, there are no such thing as lower abs. You have one rectus abdominus that runs from the sternum down to the groin area. It is one muscle whose fibers run vertically and, as we mentioned before, is ruled by the All or Nothing Principle. Because all the muscle fiber fires, the upper or lower half does not fire independently, which means we do not have lower abs. However, a muscle that runs lower on the pelvis is your transverse abdominus. Toning this lower abdominal area may help. The transverse abdominus runs from the center of the abdominal region and inserts into the low back area. When this muscle is contracted, it cinches in your waist like a corset. Training this muscle helps create tone in that area. Exercises in the beginning phases of core training help work this muscle. Refer to those exercises to learn what you can do to work the transverse abdominus.

I have heard that specific biceps training exercises can help me develop a “peak” in my biceps. Is that true?

If you are born with the proper genetics, then any biceps exercise will create a peak; otherwise, a peak can't be developed. You see, a peak will occur if you are born with long tendons and short muscles. If you are born with long muscles and short tendons, short of surgery, you cannot create a peak.

Will training my lats in different planes help develop a bigger lat muscle?

Yes! The lat muscle is a fan-shaped muscle that runs from the low back to the front of the arm. The way the muscle fibers are aligned allow the lat to be worked in different planes. When you can work a muscle to its full capacity, the muscle can develop optimally (e.g., making the muscle larger). While muscle hypertrophy (enlargement) takes increased volume, load, and proper nutrition, the lats are a great muscle that can get amazing development from simply changing the angle of resistance.

Will reverse flyes develop better rear deltoids?

Possibly. Reverse flyes help emphasize the rear deltoids, but if the shoulder is in a bad position due to poor posture, you may be doing more damage than good. Keep the shoulders, back, and neck in perfect alignment with the spine when performing a rear deltoid exercise like the reverse flyes, and you could see some great development of that muscle.

If I want better triceps, should I train with different hand positions when doing a triceps exercise?

Yes. The triceps is a muscle that has three heads, meaning that there are three different origin points to the muscle. You can emphasize different heads with different hand positions. However, for optimum muscle development, maintain good posture (keep the shoulder back and chest up).

Is it true that lunges will give a better shape to my glutes?

Maybe. Again, it will depend on whether you have muscle imbalances and what exercises you have been doing previously. Remember, if your hips are tight, your glutes will not work optimally, limiting the amount of development in the glutes. Performing a different exercise may create a different stimulus to the glute muscles, forcing them to adapt and potentially developing more. For instance, if you have been doing squats, doing lunges instead may create more development in the glutes. However, if the glutes are limited by tight hip flexors, it doesn't matter what exercise you do, you may not get the results you are seeking. All in all, lunges may not develop everyone's glutes the same way. It's not the exercise itself that will create better glutes; rather, it's the stimulus of a new exercise.

I was told that I should not do squats because of my bad knees. Can I do squats or should I avoid them? What exercises should I do instead?

First, squats are not bad. You squat everyday. It is *how* you squat that makes a difference. In our experience, most people are told to avoid squats because the way they are squatting is causing them knee problems. Many clients are what we call knee squatters. Take a look at your knees as you squat. Can you see your toes? If the answer is no, then squatting may make your knees worse.

Squatting should be done so that you can see your toes (hips should move back) and knees should stay in line with your toes (both pointed straight ahead). If you are not squatting this way, then chances are you are suffering from muscle imbalances. As we discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, muscle imbalances can lead to injury because the body is not moving as it was designed. Tight, short muscles and long, weak muscles can lead to faulty movement at the joints, increasing the chance of a limiting injury down the road. Before you eliminate squats from your routine, reread Chapters 4 and 5 and perform the overhead squat assessment. Then refer to the Movement Preparation Table in Chapter 5. Once you have incorporated the exercises in that table for two to three weeks, your squatting technique may improve, allowing you to keep this excellent exercise in your program.

How much weight should I use in the strength exercises?

Traditionally, proper resistance has been measured by an individual's one-repetition maximum (the highest amount of weight he or she can lift one time), then taking a percentage of that number based on desired adaptation. While this method is great, it isn't practical for all individuals. We recommend that you choose a resistance amount that is heavy enough so that you can lift it no more than fifteen times if you are a beginner, or ten to twelve times if you are an intermediate to advanced exerciser.

How long should I rest between exercises?

Your rest time will be determined by your desired adaptation. Use the chart below to determine your rest periods.

Acute Variables Chart				
Program Design Acute Variables for Common Adaptations				
Adaptation	Repetitions	Sets	Intensity	Rest Period
Power	1–10	3–6	Less than 10% of body weight	3 to 5 minutes
Strength	1–12	3–6	70% to 100% of your one-repetition maximum (the absolute most weight you can lift one time)	45 seconds to 5 minutes
Muscle Growth (Hypertrophy)	8–12	3–6	70% to 85% of your one-repetition maximum.	45 seconds to 1.5 minutes
Endurance	12–25	2–3	50% to 70% of your one-repetition maximum	0 seconds to 1.5 minutes

How should I begin my workout program?

Always begin your training sessions with your movement preparation warm-up. This will get your muscles warm and firing optimally. In addition, the movement preparation warm-up is designed to help you avoid exercise-related injuries, so take the time to make sure the warm-up gets done!

How do I know if I am using the right intensity during the resistance-training exercises?

If you can complete the required amount of repetitions and sets without feeling fatigue in the muscles you are using, the weight is not heavy enough. You should feel tired at the end of the set, barely able to push out one more repetition.

Can I do the same program two days in a row? How long should I wait before exercising again?

No. We know you how excited you are to get moving and reach your goals. However, we want to keep you safe and healthy. Your body needs at least forty-eight hours to recover. It is during the recovery period that your body changes! Give yourself time to rest and recuperate before you perform the routine again. On the off-days, you are more than welcome to do a light activity, but again, we don't want you to overtrain. Overtraining can lead to injury and negative effects.

What if I can't fit everything in (resistance training and cardio) in one day?

Split them up! You do not have to perform your cardio and resistance training on the same day. If you are in a time crunch, split up your strength-training and cardio-training sessions. This can help ensure you are doing some form of activity every day.

How do I know if I am doing the move correctly?

Proper exercise form is extremely important when exercising. Here are some tips for making sure you are in the correct posture throughout all exercises:

- Chin tucked into your neck
- Shoulders pulled back and down
- Abdominals tight
- Knees in line with toes during every exercise (knees should not move over toes when exercising)
- Feet pointed straight ahead

Another point to understand is that when you are doing things right, you should not feel pain. This does not mean you shouldn't feel sore or have some muscle fatigue, but sharp and localized pain is not good. If you feel pain, stop the exercise. Check your posture. If you feel you are doing the move correctly, but are still having pain, seek professional advice. Ask a local fitness professional to evaluate your form or, if the pain persists, talk with your doctor. Remember to take the time to read through each exercise description carefully!

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