



The Hierarchy of Fat Loss

By Alwyn Cosgrove

1. Correct Nutrition

There is pretty much nothing that can be done to out-train a crappy diet. You quite simply have to create a caloric deficit while eating enough protein and essential fats. There is no way around this.

2. See Number 1

Yep. It really is that important. Several trainers have espoused that the only difference between training for muscle gain and training for fat loss is your diet. I think that's a massive oversimplification but it does reinforce how important and effective correct nutrition is toward your ultimate goal.

3. Activities that burn calories maintain/promote muscle mass and elevate metabolism

I think it's fairly obvious that the bulk of calories burned are determined by our resting metabolic rate or RMR. The amount of calories burned outside of our resting metabolism (through exercise, thermic effect of feeding etc) is a smaller contributor to overall calories burned per day.

We can also accept that RMR is largely a function of how much muscle you have on your body -- and how hard it works. Therefore, adding activities that promote or maintain muscle mass will make that muscle mass work harder and elevate the metabolic rate. This will become our number one training priority when developing fat-loss programs.

4. Activities that burn calories and elevate metabolism

The next level of fat-loss programming would be a similar activity. We're still looking at activities that eat up calories and increase EPOC. EPOC (Exercise Post Oxygen Consumption) is defined scientifically as the "recovery of metabolic rate back to pre-exercise levels" and "can require several minutes for light exercise and several hours for hard intervals." Essentially, we are looking for activities that keep us burning more calories after the exercise session.

5. Activities that burn calories but don't necessarily maintain muscle or elevate metabolism

This is the "icing on the cake" -- adding in activities that will burn up some more calories but don't necessarily contribute to increasing metabolism. This is the least effective tool in your arsenal (as it doesn't burn much outside of the primary exercise session).