

Quiz: Fitness fact or fitness fiction?

1. When you exercise, go for the intense burn in your muscles.

Correct answer: False

Remember that saying, "No pain, no gain"? Not true. Exercise shouldn't hurt. A little muscle soreness when you do something new isn't unusual, but soreness doesn't equal pain. You don't need to make your muscles burn to know they're working. If it hurts, you're probably pushing yourself too hard.

2. Aerobic exercise is all that really matters.

Correct answer: False

Aerobic exercise is important. But a balanced fitness program also includes strength training and stretching, as well as exercises to improve balance and stability. Not enough time in the day for so many exercises? Never fear. Many activities include more than one exercise type. Take aerobic exercises such as walking and jogging. These activities increase your heart rate while helping you maintain balance and build strength in your lower body.

3. Women who strength train are bound to bulk up.

Correct answer: False

If you simply want to improve your strength and muscle tone, don't worry about pumped-up muscles. Thanks to genetics, hormones and women's natural body types, most women are unlikely to develop bulky muscles with routine strength training. Instead, you'll increase your lean muscle mass — which can make it easier to perform your daily tasks and maintain a healthy weight.

4. Exercise helps you sleep better.

Correct answer: True

Regular exercise can help you fall asleep faster and deepen your sleep. The timing is up to you — but if you're having trouble sleeping, you might want

to try late afternoon workouts. The natural dip in body temperature five to six hours after you exercise might help you fall asleep. If you exercise too close to bedtime, you might be too alert to drift off when it's time to go to sleep.

5. Exercise has to be strenuous to be beneficial.

Correct answer: False

You don't have to push yourself to extremes to get the benefits of exercise. In fact, any movement is good. You can fit plenty of physical activity into your life by doing things you enjoy. Take a dance class, dust off your bike or check out a local hiking trail. If you're short on time, take 10-minute activity breaks — think jumping jacks, brisk walks, running in place — throughout the day.

6. You can eat whatever you want if you exercise enough.

Correct answer: False

You deserve a reward for sticking to a workout routine, but eating with abandon isn't the answer. If you consume more calories than you burn in a day, you'll gain weight — no matter how much you exercise. Instead, strike a sensible balance between what you eat and how much you exercise.

7. Abdominal exercises will flatten your stomach.

Correct answer: False

Crunches and other ab exercises can help you strengthen your abs and improve your posture and abdominal muscle tone. But muscle is muscle and fat is fat. If you have excess abdominal fat, you won't be able to see your ab muscles, no matter how many crunches you do. To lose the fat — and show off those toned abs — you need to burn more calories than you consume.

8. Aerobic exercise permanently speeds up your metabolism.

Correct answer: False

Your metabolism — the rate at which you burn calories — speeds up while you're exercising, and perhaps for a short time afterward. But it doesn't stay

that way all day. If you want to rev up your metabolism overall, add strength training to your aerobic workouts. You'll build calorie-burning muscle while you're working off excess fat.

9. Exercise can put the spark back into your sex life.

Correct answer: True

Regular exercise can leave you feeling energized and looking better, which may have a positive effect on your sex life. But there's more to it than that. Exercise improves your circulation, which can lead to more satisfying sex. And men who exercise regularly are less likely to have problems with erectile dysfunction than are men who don't exercise, especially as they get older.

10. The more you sweat, the more fat you'll lose.

Correct answer: False

The harder you work out, the more calories you'll burn — and the more fat you stand to lose. But how much you sweat isn't a reliable indicator of how hard you're working. And any weight you lose through sweating is almost entirely water. The weight will return when you drink after your workout.