

## Cardio or Weights?

This is the question on many people's minds. The goal of all new and seasoned fitness buffs is to enhance your physique in the most time efficient and effective manner possible. So, how do you best spend your time and money? Should you hit the pavement for that 'long, slow cardio burn' or run to the weight room?

That question is best answered in two words: resistance training! Resistance training will 'sculpt' your physique into the body of your dreams. Having said this, you don't need to invest in an expensive gym membership or home gym. Resistance training can be done with a minimal amount of equipment (see last month's column) and body weight exercises. As well, I'm not saying that there isn't a place for 'cardio' in your fitness regimen. Both resistance and cardiovascular training are important for overall health.

Resistance training does something that cardio alone will not. It builds lean, active tissue or muscle mass. Not the slabs of muscle that you see on bodybuilders. But even a modest gain in lean muscle mass is aesthetically pleasing and beneficial to your health. Muscle is active tissue. Your body requires calories to maintain it, even at rest. If your body becomes more efficient and burns more calories, you are able to EAT MORE and not gain weight. Also, muscle is denser than fat. It takes up LESS SPACE, making more room in your clothes. While your body weight may not change dramatically as you continue your weight training program, your clothes will fit differently. If you gain a little muscle and lose a little fat, you will look and feel better, and you will function more efficiently.

What about cardio? Cardiovascular training promotes cardiovascular health. An effective cardio program should include some higher intensity training as a component. This will continuously change the level or pace of your work which will increase and decrease your heart rate. This can be achieved while running, cycling, skipping, doing body weight resistance exercises, or any number of other ways. The key is to maintain high intensity training levels for shorter intervals. You will burn extra calories during your workout, and, more importantly, you will elevate your metabolism for a time after your workout is done. Going for that 'long, slow burn' while doing cardio may be satisfying for some, but if physique enhancement is your goal, then this isn't the most efficient way to train.

Finally, I can't stress enough the need to monitor your diet in order to see aesthetic changes in your physique. Once you are a consistent exerciser, 80% of how you look is predicated on your diet. There are many 'fit but fat' people. If you want the best results possible from your training regimen, do some resistance training, some higher intensity interval training and maintain a healthy diet that's higher in protein and vegetables and lower in processed foods, especially carbohydrates and fats.

By Shawna Kaminski – [Calgary NW Adventure Boot Camp](#)

Shawna is shaking up the fitness routines of several people in her outdoor boot camps and with personal training. Please contact the editor if you wish to work with her.