

Why Exercise?

Contributed by Peter Moorhead

Why should I exercise when I just need to stop eating to lose weight? Some people, even though they may work very hard to maintain their athletic figures, we regard as lucky, because being overweight for them is not an issue where as for us, it certainly is. You see the problem is that our bodies were designed to cope when life was very different to now in our modern world. When the first humans as we recognise them rolled off the production line, a body had to run during the hunt, to store food energy after the feast and to sleep and make babies during the cold winter.

These days we no longer need to run to catch our food and for most of us there is no scarcity over winter. But, our bodies still function in the way they were designed. So the big problem for most of us is shifting the fat that our body systems are programmed to store for those lean times that never come. Weight loss for most of us, is a battle of willpower verses nature and guess what, in the conventional battle, nature wins. If we continue the battle analogy then the saying "know your enemy" may be appropriate here. To understand how our bodies work and how we can use our biological systems to work for rather than against us, helps us to reach our fitness goals. Diet obviously plays a major role here and we shall consider the role of food as a fuel another time. At this point I should step up to clearly state my absolute conviction that health, fitness and weight control cannot be achieved by either dieting or exercise alone. A body needs to address both sides of the energy equation, which simply stated says: If Energy In (+) (from food eaten) is greater than Energy Out (-) (from daily activities) then a body will gain weight from surplus energy (stored as body fat). So if we can tip the balance the other way then: If Energy In (+) is less than Energy Out (-) then a body will lose weight: And while that is true, the problem is that if weight loss is only from a reduction of energy from food, the weight loss will be from fluids (essentially water) fat, and lean tissue (muscle) and what happens when, despite your fanatical willpower, nature eventually takes charge and you quit the process that your system "sees" as starving - all the weight goes back on again. Sound familiar? But now we have a problem, as well as fluid and fat we have lost lean tissue in the form of muscle and now, with no exercise the weight goes back on as fluid and fat (not muscle). So guess what? We are now WORSE OFF than before because even resting muscle uses energy whereas fat - resting or otherwise - uses none. Can you see how that affects the equation? At Celebrate Health & Fitness, any of the programmes we follow in your quest for a healthier lifestyle includes small modifications to eating and drinking habits in terms of quantities, types and times of eating. On the Energy In (+) side of the equation we will reduce the input from food and increase Energy Out (-) from the extra exercise activity by adopting an exercise regime of small steps building in intensity as your body adapts and grows stronger.