

No valid discussion about weight loss can omit the topic of exercise. To conclude this series I would like to discuss the two reasons exercise is so important for sustained weight loss.

First, exercise burns calories. Any activity that requires energy will burn calories and the more energy expended, the more calories will be burned. Any type of activity that increases the breathing and heart rate will do, but the more you involve the large muscles in the body such as the legs, the more energy will be expended.

Aerobic exercise, such as running, bike riding, swimming, and many fast paced sports, will burn the most calories while the activity is performed. Resistance exercises like weight lifting will continue to burn calories even after the activity stops. A combination of the two will provide the most benefit.

Resistance exercise has additional benefits beyond immediate calorie burn. In the body there are both biologically active tissues and biologically inactive tissues. The biologically active tissues burn energy constantly. The inactive tissues do not. Fat tissue does not burn a significant amount of energy, but muscle tissue does, even when not exercising. The more muscle tissue that you have, the more calories your body burns at rest.

In an earlier article, I wrote that when needing energy, the body will first burn carbohydrates stored in the body, then it will burn fat and muscle. One of the biggest dieting mistakes that people make is crash dieting without exercise. This results in muscle loss which lowers the metabolism and promotes weight gain.

The body is extremely adaptable. If you need muscle, it will build muscle. Resistance exercise tells the body that you need whichever muscles that you happen to be working. If you do this while dieting and the body needs to turn to either fat or muscle to provide energy, it will more likely burn fat. If you don't exercise, or you exercise only some of your muscles, then when needing energy the body will burn muscle and fat. The more muscle that you lose, the harder it will be to continue to lose weight and to keep it off.

A sensible weight loss program requires permanent changes in lifestyle that include reducing calorie consumption as well as both aerobic and resistance exercises. For additional information including the other articles in this series, visit our website at [lifetouchclinics.com](http://lifetouchclinics.com).