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# Exercise and Your Weight

Exercise is not a great way to lose weight. That may surprise you, but it's absolutely true. However it's difficult to lose weight and maintain it without exercise. Seems like a contradiction? Not as much as you'd think. Recent research shed some light on the role exercise can play in weight gain. In an unrelated article, another researcher gives an opinion why. Let's take a look.

## Cycling, Walking, and Weight Gain

In a study on the Nurses Health Study II, researchers reported the relationship between bicycle riding, walking, and weight gain over a 16-year span in premenopausal women who began the study with an average age of 32 years (1). The researchers focused on bicycling because it hadn't been done before with female subjects. The results were not surprising—at least not to me.

- All women gained weight over 16 years with the average weight gain being 20 pounds. The women with a starting BMI less than 25.0 gained less and those with a higher starting BMI gained more.
- As the number of minutes of bicycling per day went up, weight gain was reduced.
- As the number of minutes of brisk walking per day went up, weight gain was reduced.
- The reduction in weight gain was greatest in obese women who walked briskly and/or bicycled the most.
- But here's the important thing: slow walking had no effect on weight gain in any group. They gained the most. Sauntering might be okay to enjoy the day, but if you want some benefit from exercising, you need a little sweat equity.

Although not studied, the same would be true for other forms of exercise as well. While other activities were not broken into individual activities such as running or ballroom dancing, the more strenuous the exercise, the lower the weight gain.

Do the math: 20.5 pounds over 16 years is 1.25 pounds per year. That's not very many calories per day—about 12. So why would that little bit of exercise have a profound effect? It might have something to do with epigenetics.

## Epigenetics

In the same issue of *Archives of Internal Medicine*, a researcher commented on a different study on exercise and aging, using epigenetics as a way to explain why exercise during midlife may have an effect when we're older. The simplest way to explain epigenetics is that changes can occur in your DNA after you're born that will not be passed on to your children. These epimutations can have a profound effect on your body, but they are probably limited to you. Biochemical changes can occur in your DNA that can have an effect on your health for the long term.

Relating that to the first study, exercise when you're younger may have lasting effects as you get older. For example, it may change the way you process a nutrient such as carbohydrates or fat. Those changes to your DNA can have a positive effect years later. While there is without question a dose-response effect to exercise, the most important benefits may be more than just calories burned while exercising.

This is another reason why you should take the Inherent Health Weight Loss Genetic Test. Knowing how to eat and how to exercise based on your genes may help you reduce the weight gain that seems to be inevitable for women—and men as well. Check it out today.

## The Bottom Line

Exercise is key to your long-term weight management. Sure, you burn calories when you exercise, and we're all trying to find the best way to do that in the least amount of time. But it's the long-term effects that are really the most important reason why you should exercise today and every day. Get off it and get after it.

What are you prepared to do today?

***Dr. Chet***

**References:**
1. Arch Intern Med. 2010;170(12):1050-1056.
2. Arch Intern Med. 2010;170(12):1087.