

The 30 Pound Club

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Efficient

Last week I wrote about calorie calculators. I also said that the more overweight a person is, the more calories he or she uses for a given workload. That begs the question: do you burn fewer calories for a given workload the more weight you lose? The answer is yes—and that partially explains why weight plateaus happen. Not only is there less mass to move requiring less fuel, exercise training teaches the body to use the fewest number of calories to get any job done. In a word, the body becomes efficient.

Doesn't seem fair, does it? Actually it is. As your body becomes better trained, you'll be able to go farther and at a higher intensity. You can do more because of all the time you've spent in exercise training. The problem is that you have to increase the speed or resistance or time spent—or all three—in order to burn the same number of calories you used to use. That's where you have to challenge yourself a little bit.

It's comfortable to do the same workout. After the initial training effect, it doesn't hurt quite as much as it used to do, and you can breeze through it comfortably. But if you're going to use more calories, you have to raise the bar. If you reach a weight plateau, I recommend you try the interval training workout in the Health Info section of my website. Interspersing interval training once or twice a week allows you to work harder for short intervals with rest intervals in between. That means you burn more calories during the workout, and the intense intervals of exercise will induce muscle damage, which will burn more calories for a few hours after you're done. A little muscle damage is a good thing; think of it like pruning a shrub—you take off a bit to make the shrub stronger as it grows back. That approach really helps bust plateaus.

Couple more things. Many you have heard of muscle confusion from infomercials. There really is no such thing, but what it does is use the same muscles in different ways. The simplest example would be walking versus running. The same leg muscles are used, but because of the different forces and angles between the two, you use slightly different muscle groups within the muscles themselves. Interval training does the same thing.

Does becoming efficient mean you'll always have to keep increasing the intensity or duration? No. Eventually, you'll get a balance between your diet, your exercise level, and your body weight in order to maintain the body weight you desire. It's a fine line but with practice, you can achieve that balance.

One and Done.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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