

UNCOVERING EXERCISE MYTHS

Here are some popular myths that we seem to hear about on a regular basis along with the facts.

MYTH: *Stretching before exercising is necessary to warm up muscles.* **FACT:** The truth is stretching does little to warm up muscles, and may actually promote muscle and tendon injuries.

Get your body ready with low-intensity aerobic exercises for 5-10 minutes; stop; stretch thoroughly; and continue with your workout. Then end with 5-10 minutes of stretching.

MYTH: *Once exercise is stopped, muscle turns to fat.* **FACT:** Fat and muscle never turn into each other because they are two entirely different kinds of tissue. But muscles shrink when you're sedentary, and if you eat too many calories, body fat can accumulate next to them.

MYTH: *Regular exercise wears out the knees and back, and may cause arthritis.* **FACT:** People who exercise regularly don't suffer from arthritis any more than their sedentary counterparts. In fact, studies show that exercise is beneficial in maintaining muscles, tendons, and joints. And when arthritis is present, exercise helps ease the pain by keeping muscles strong and joints limber.

MYTH: *Sit-ups will help reduce a big stomach.* **FACT:** Sit-ups and other so-called "spot reducing" exercises may firm and strengthen certain muscle groups, giving a trimmer appearance, but these exercises will not selectively reduce the fat covering these muscles. To lose fat in one area, you have to lose it from your whole body. This is best accomplished by combining calorie-burning aerobic activities like brisk walking and cycling with a lower-calorie diet.

MYTH: *Drinking water before and during exercise will give you cramps.* **FACT:** Water is important for people who exercise. Exercise causes the body to lose up to two quarts of fluid an hour. Even if you're not thirsty, you need to drink water to avoid dehydration. By the time you become thirsty, you're already slightly dehydrated.

(Submitted by Larry B. Wickham, Wellness Committee)