

Maximize the benefits of exercise with good nutrition

by Dr. Jamie McManus



The scientific evidence behind the health benefits of exercise is undeniable. Studies have shown that exercise can help you control your blood sugar, improve your mood, reduce your anxiety, and lower your risk for many common diseases such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and more. Increasing your activity level can help you on your weight loss journey but is even more beneficial for helping keep weight off, once you've lost it.

One of the most visible outcomes of exercise is also one of the most beneficial to your health – an increase in lean body mass (muscle) and reduction in body fat.

The health implications with carrying around too much abdominal fat are many and include an increased risk for many diseases including diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. Studies show that reducing abdominal fat improves blood sugar control and reduces cardiovascular risk factors.

It is clear that exercise is good for you, but you might also want to understand how to get the most “bang for your exercise buck” by incorporating better nutrition along with your exercise program. After all, if you put in the “sweat time”, you might as well get the maximum benefit for your hard work.

To understand the importance of nutrition and exercise, Shaklee sponsored a study published in the Journal of Exercise Physiology in 2011 that showed just how important getting the right nutrients can be for getting the most out of exercise.

The study followed 52 people for 9 months who were randomized into one of three groups: a control group that had no intervention, a group that followed an exercise only routine, and a group that did the same exercise routine and also took a nutrition regimen consisting of a post-exercise protein smoothie and a multi-component nutrition daily strip.

The chart below summarizes the groups:

Control Group

- No changes in food or exercise.

Exercise only Group

- Aerobic and strength training exercise.
- No added nutritional products

Exercise plus Nutrition Group

- Aerobic and strength training exercise.
- Protein-rich smoothie
- Multi-nutrient pack containing a multi-vitamin/mineral, omega-3, extra B and C vitamins and a probiotic.

At the end of nine months, researchers assessed changes in bone mineral density, lean body weight, and blood pressure. The results were astounding. As expected, the people who did nothing had no significant changes; but both their lean body mass and bone mineral density tended to decrease over the course of the study. The exercise only group also didn't show any significant changes, although they did tend to maintain their bone density and they increased their lean body mass more than the people who did nothing.

The real winners in this study were the people who used nutrition and exercised. This last group significantly increased their lean body mass (33% better than the people who just exercised), improved their blood pressure, and maintained their bone mineral density. This study joins others studies that confirm exercise is good for you and that providing your body with the proper nutrition can have dramatic effects on your health. Adding supplements and protein to your day (especially immediately following exercise) is an easy way to increase the benefits you get from exercise and ultimately, to improving your overall health and appearance.