

On The Spot

Written by Ian Hart
Monday, 21 June 2010 07:10



Do you ever go to the gym and work out your triceps in attempt to burn the fat off your arms or do crunches to make your belly fat disappear? There is a common misconception called spot reduction, which is belief that the area you are working out is where the fat will burn off. Spot reduction seems logical, but in actuality it couldn't be further from the truth.

In order to burn fat you need to burn a lot of calories. Doing single joint exercises and abdominal exercises burn very few calories and are inefficient if you are trying to burn fat. Examples of single joint exercises are arm curls, tricep extensions, shoulder raises and leg extensions. In an arm curl for example you are just using your elbow joint to stimulate your bicep, which is a small muscle that will not burn many calories. Whereas if you do a row (where you are pulling weights to your chest similar to the action of rowing as in a row boat) you are using your elbow and your shoulder joints and working large muscles in your back and your biceps simultaneously, burning more calories and moving you closer toward your goal of burning fat. Do you follow me?

The area where we put fat on first is usually the area where it is going to come off last. Fat is stored in patterns that are genetically predetermined. Women generally tend to store fat in their hips and thighs first, making it the last place where fat will burn off, where as men will store fat in the belly and lower back region first. A proper program that involves cardiovascular training and weight training will decrease fat stores all over your body, including your trouble spots. Another tip - don't have sugary foods at least a couple of hours before training. Our body's preferred source of energy is sugar and will burn sugar before fat. So if you want to dip into those fat stores more quickly, lay off the sugar – including sports drinks, etc. - close to your training sessions.

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Burning fat comes down to burning more calories than you consume, training properly and having a balanced diet. I hope this clears some misconceptions up and helps you along your journey toward a fitter, leaner, healthier you.

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