

7 FITNESS MYTHS BUSTED

MYTH 1: Crunches will melt your belly and give you six-pack abs.

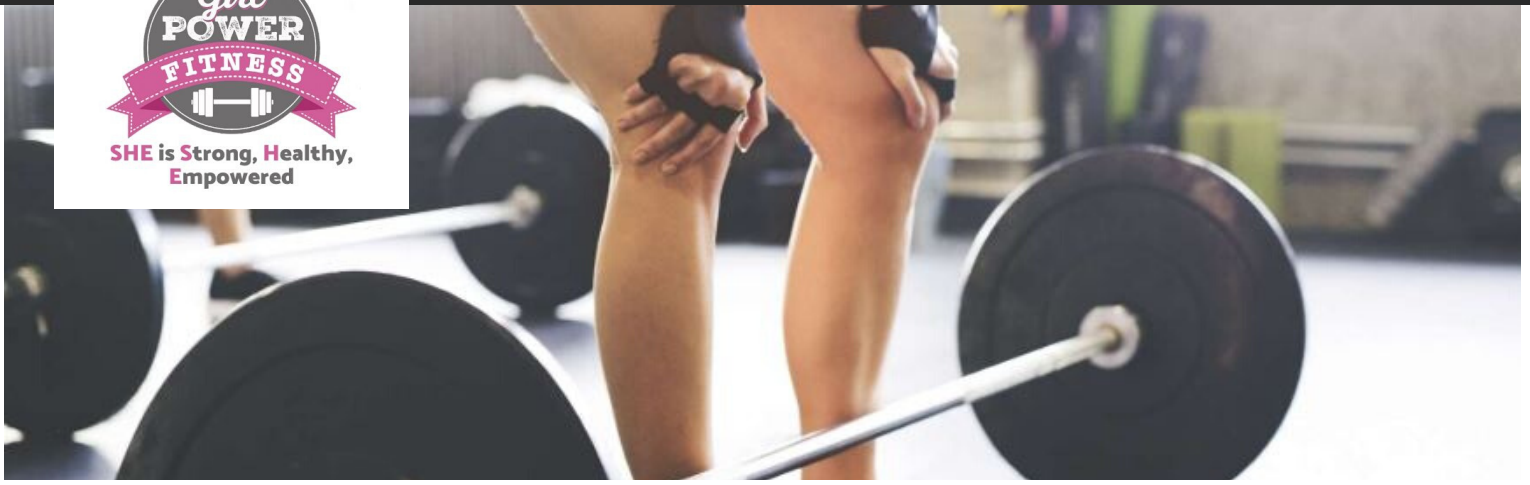
- **MYTHBUSTER:** That wouldn't happen even if you did sit-ups five days a week for six weeks. That's what 24 adults were asked to do in a study reported in The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research. Crunches were just one of seven abdominal exercises the participants performed religiously. After six weeks, researchers found the adults lost no belly fat — and they certainly didn't see their abs. In fact, they failed to lose fat anywhere in their bodies.
- **REALITY CHECK:** You won't see your ab muscles (they're there) until you lose your belly fat. The best way to do that is by eating a healthy diet and reducing or eliminating sugar from the foods you eat.



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MYTH 2: Walking on a treadmill is just as effective as walking outside.

- **MYTHBUSTER:** Not true. Outdoors, your body must deal with wind resistance, hills and uneven terrain, which engage your muscles, requiring more energy. Studies show you burn about 10 percent more calories by walking or running outside than you would on a treadmill.
- **REALITY CHECK:** You can mimic an outdoor walk or run on a treadmill and burn more calories by increasing the grade of the treadmill surface and picking up the pace. Try interval training, in which you speed up for a minute and then slow down for a recovery period of a minute or two.



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MYTH 3: Stretching before exercise prevents injury.

- **MYTHBUSTER:** Your high school basketball coach probably started practice by having you do static stretching — that is, holding a stretch for about 20 seconds. Turns out just holding a stretch on a cold muscle can actually cause injury.
- **REALITY CHECK:** What does prevent injury is a warm-up before exercising to increase both body heat and blood flow to the muscle. And it can improve flexibility, too, if done the right way. Exercise physiologists call this dynamic stretching or a dynamic warm-up. It's as simple as doing an aerobic activity that mimics the movements you'd do in exercise.



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MYTH 4: No pain, no gain.

- **MYTHBUSTER:** This is one of the most dangerous myths ever. Exercise should not hurt.
- **REALITY CHECK:** Feeling some soreness a day or two after a workout is normal, but if you experience sharp pain while lifting or running, don't push through it. Stop immediately.



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MYTH 5: You should have a sports drink during and after every workout to replenish electrolytes.

- **MYTHBUSTER:** Sports drinks might seem like a good idea, because they deliver electrolytes — like potassium and sodium — your body needs, but unless you are doing long, sweaty, very rigorous workouts, you don't need them. Sports drinks also contain lots of sugar — as much as 53 grams in a 32-ounce bottle of regular Gatorade. If you make a regular habit of sports drinks — drinking them even when you're not exercising — you might end up gaining weight.
- **REALITY CHECK:** Four to six ounces of cool water every 15 minutes is all you need for exercise in moderate temperatures for less than an hour. If it's hot out or you're exercising strenuously for more than 60 minutes, then consider having a sports drink to replenish electrolytes lost through sweating.



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MYTH 6: You can target fat burn to a specific part of your body.

- **MYTHBUSTER:** You can't control where you lose body fat during exercise. A study in The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research recently proved this fact. Researchers gave 11 people a 12-week exercise program designed to exercise a single leg. Using weight-lifting machines, the participants exercised only one leg, but lost nearly the same amount of body fat from both legs. What's more, the exercisers reduced even more body fat above the waist.
- **REALITY CHECK:** If you want to target belly fat, combine exercise with a diet plan that includes foods rich in protein and fiber (whole grains and vegetables) and cuts back on processed foods and fast-burning carbohydrates (white breads, pasta, baked goods and sweetened beverages).



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MYTH 7: The best time to work out is first thing in the morning.

- **MYTHBUSTER:** Any time of day is the best time to exercise if you do it consistently and, ideally, daily. So, if exercising in the morning is impossible or simply unpleasant for you, find a better time.
- **REALITY CHECK:** Studies suggest exercising in the morning elevates your metabolism to burn more calories throughout the day and, therefore, boost weight loss, but it would work only if you did it consistently.



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**This great information on fitness myths
provided by Jeff Csatari.**

Csatari's new book, The 14-Day No Sugar Diet, is
available digitally and in print.