

5 myths of metabolism debunked at 40

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Abstract

The time reads as 2:00 am on the corner of his mobile screen, as he is frantically typing on his phone in this wee hour of the night. The mobile screen lights up his determined face in the darkroom, sliding halfway in the bed he frantically types onto the mobile screen chatting in the Whatsapp group with his friends who are all going to be turning 40 this year. The situation looks tense which usually is for any Whatsapp group these days when the members of the group are debating about looping topics around Coronavirus or politics, but this one looks much more intense than usual. The discussion in the group is about fitness, which can be a touchy topic, for these friends in their late thirties, who has just woken up to get fit in the last few months before they soon hit their 40th milestone. And you know what happens when you are working out or get into new physical activity to get fit. Yes, you guessed it right... you talk a lot about it, a lot: you talk about the work out of the day, share pictures, compare time spent in getting fit. And it can get real touchy when the credit of a fast transition is given to the metabolism of the person instead of the hard work one puts in to get there. And this seems to be the core of the argument for these soon to be 40 dudes. This touches upon some popular beliefs, experience with metabolism, and the fitness challenges of the '40s:

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“Thinner people have higher metabolism rates than overweight people”

Let's address the elephant in the room with the most popular argument first. If you are thin, then obviously your metabolism is considered to be better than fat people, this is one endless debate in getting fit that flows down to how thin ones manage to get fit without doing much effort than the thicker ones because of their better metabolism. The poor thicker people have to give up so much in the diet to get there because they aren't as blessed. Now, this is a convenient excuse. Actually, the bodies of larger people require more energy than smaller people. That means, as you lose weight, you'll need less food to fuel your body. And after a weight loss, if you return to old eating and exercise habits, the weight will come back because you're providing more fuel (food) than your body needs. So, the key is you need to keep active and eat only how much it is necessary to keep those pounds away.

“Eating less is good for your metabolism”

It may seem logical that eating less gives way to a speedier metabolism, but the opposite may be true. Eating a lot less food can kick your body into what's commonly known as a starvation mode — your metabolism slows so you use less energy and burn fewer calories. Your body may also drop muscle mass to conserve energy. Starvation mode tends to leave you feeling hungrier and sluggish. Food cravings can lead you to eat more and undo weight loss efforts. So, starvation is a bad way to lose weight especially for us in the '40s as we may end up looking and feeling weaker than leaner.

“Crash diets work better than moderate diets”

In the late 30's you find many of us jumping into restrictive diets to get faster results as if they are trying to make up for their good sins of past years, some also think it is healthy to do so. But it isn't the restrictive diet that will help you in the long run, but moderation in eating that will help. As by giving up bread, sweets, coffee (coffee actually helps in upping your metabolism rate), etc. will only give you timely impact & once you restart these so-called poisons again your temptation will kick in & you might try to overcompensate for the lost time. If the restrictive method in eating is 100...0...30 (30 being the perfect level) moderation method is 100...80...60...40...30 where maintaining your 30 levels can be easier when you achieve it with the moderation method than jumping back to 100 from 30 levels in the restrictive method. It is logical as you aren't jumping in numbers and you are going down slowly. The secret code of healthy eating for us in the '40s is more of moderation, not a restriction, considering we would like to live a fuller life than fighting our cravings.

“My metabolism is slow because of my age & genes”

In reality, your metabolism only slows if you become less active. Your best metabolism-boosting plan is to stay active! Genes or age may have very little to do with metabolism which many people tactfully do blame that they are victims of bad metabolism because of their age and genes, hence they cannot lose those pounds. The vast majority of people who complain about their slow metabolisms don't have a metabolism problem

at all. They have a movement problem. A lack of movement, that is. Now, how many times have you or someone you know, when discussing diet, weight loss, and exercise, groaned and complained about a slow metabolism? The phrase “I can just look at food and gain weight!”. Yes, many people do have hormonal problems that make weight loss harder. But if otherwise, we are having difficulty losing weight and blaming it on our metabolism but our blood work and hormones are actually in line, then you have to start thinking about where the problem really lies. It’s easy to lose sight of all this information when we compare ourselves to others who seem to effortlessly lose weight or stay lean. We often compare how much we are working out and how much we are eating, and then we blame our genetics for giving us this tortoise-like ability to lose fat. The subtle but consistent differences in activity and lifestyle make it appear that we have two camps: those who stay thin effortlessly and those who do not. But really it’s a case of those who are active in an effortless or routine way and those who are not active.

“Intense workouts boost your metabolism”

It is simple, more exercise equals more calories burned, right? According to the numbers on the machines at the gym, yes. But this actually isn’t the case. Many experts say that if you push your body too far in our 40’s, your body enters an inflammatory, stressed state, and your hormones get totally out of whack, which in turn messes with your metabolism. Your metabolism

won't be able to work efficiently unless you give your body time to rest. What will be more effective than intensity for us is to be regular with your work out? Consistency is the most important factor in getting fit, how consistent you are with your work out will ultimately make you get there faster. It’s a popular myth you have no control over your metabolism, in fact, it is simply your metabolism gets improved because of your regular workout and healthy lifestyle. The golden rule is consistency always beats intensity in the long run. Though the workout routine has been derailed during the lockdown, what is important is to be self-motivated by doing workouts at home may it be simple push-ups, functional workouts, or Yoga whatever works for you best. There is a great opportunity in the digital fitness industry with the current pandemic as we don’t know when we are going to be stepping out for our workouts normally again. Don’t wait for it to join the digital wave in fitness.

As these thoughts get vehemently discussed yet again in the Whatsapp group it’s 2:30 am already and he gets nudged by his wife who is now getting disturbed in her sleep by the glaring phone light. He knows it’s time to pause this never-ending debate or choose to be thrown out of his own room in the middle of the night. He chooses the right thing to do as his sleepy eyes are staring back at the mobile screen he keys in his last words **“Fitness is not a race, it’s a journey you need to enjoy it and don’t blame your metabolism”** as he signs off from the group and saves the night.

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