

Losing body fat

In overweight or obese adults, the exercise intensity which corresponds to maximal fat oxidation is about 40-50% of VO₂ max. That's about the same intensity as brisk walking just fast enough to get slightly out of breath.



You don't need to fully understand VO₂ max: it is a way of expressing how much oxygen you can use per kg of body weight. Don't worry about the "max" either – you will not be expected to exercise to exhaustion as athletes might – your trainer can estimate VO₂ max from a much lower level intensity.

Typically you will warm up for 5-minutes at 10-20% of VO₂ max, followed by a workload of about 40-50% VO₂ max, pedaling with a rate kept at 60 rpm. Exercising at a higher intensity uses more energy, but this is mostly from carbohydrate, whereas fat oxidation rate increases up to only 40% VO₂ max.

Photo is your personal trainer showing that he knows how to get ripped! You may not want to take your percentage bodyfat as low as this - but it shows that he knows how to lose bodyfat and maintain muscle!

Many trainers suggest working out at a higher intensity because it uses more calories in total; however that may not be the *most efficient* way to lose body fat. Until you become used to exercise, higher intensity tends to lead to earlier exhaustion. It is true that the more calories used, the greater your weight loss, so an increase in intensity and/or duration, would be beneficial when you get fitter.

Exercise *intensity* can be monitored by a heart rate monitor (e.g. Polar), or the monitor built in to the equipment, and you can quickly learn to assess how hard you are working without needing the monitor.

Resistance training

In addition to the aerobic training, you will also be recommended to do some weight training. The initial program will consist of just 1 set of about 10 repetitions of 6 different exercises targeting major muscle groups.

Calorie deficit

To “lose” a bit less than 0.5 kg a week, which is the recommended rate, you need to achieve an energy **deficit** of about 600 kcal a day. You will soon discover it is very much easier to not eat or drink the calories than it is to use them up. So you might achieve a negative intake of say 400 kcal, and “use up” 200 kcal through exercise a day. As an example, a 70 kg person trying to lose weight might only need to consume just 1,200 kcal a day from food and drink.

Your trainer can work out how many calories you need a day when you are not exercising. Most people are surprised to learn how much they actually need to eat to live on while losing weight and it is very much less than what they were eating and putting on weight!

By the way, without exception, people who are unable to eat, for whatever reason, lose weight. Most people who say they “can’t” lose weight have usually not yet come to terms with the self-discipline needed, and will continue to “blame” external factors.

Decide to do it

If you’re among them, try saying to yourself: “What do I *want*? I want to lose weight.” Do this each time before you buy food or drink or consume it, or when you simply have nothing else to think about. Then your mind can begin to help you make the right choices. For example, it is easier to not buy snacks than to try not to eat them when you have them in the kitchen!