

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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“Is Exercise More Important Than Diet?”

Experts say that you can't outrun your forks and the notion that moving more will translate to weight loss is a dangerous one. Do we need to unhitch exercise from our [weight-management](#) wagons? Also, is it how much we are eating or what we are eating? Over the years, studies have found that a high body mass index (BMI) is linked to higher rates of all-cause mortality. Obesity increases the risk of developing dozens of health problems. In the past four decades, obesity rates have doubled in more than 70 countries and steadily increased in almost every country across the world. In 2015, high BMI was found to be the cause of 4 million deaths globally, with more than two-thirds of those deaths due to cardiovascular disease. A recent study suggests that individuals who adhered to a Mediterranean diet, (which emphasizes vegetables, fruits, fish, nuts, unrefined grains, and fermented dairy products) and were overweight—but not obese—had the lowest rates of all-cause mortality. These studies suggest that a diet like this can lead to health benefits like reduced blood pressure, lower inflammation and lipid levels, and improved metabolism. Of course, there are a number of factors at play here. The authors note that overweight people appear to be less likely to exercise. Also, it's unclear whether exercise is any more important than several other risk-lowering factors, like attaining a higher level of education, according to the results. One of the studies cited found that exercise capacity “is a more powerful predictor of mortality among men than other established risk factors for cardiovascular disease,” including BMI. Another study, which analyzed the health of over 334,000 individuals, found that twice as many deaths could be attributed to a lack of physical activity than those attributed to obesity. The authors even suggest that the equivalent of 20 minutes of brisk walking per day could be the key to reducing the chance of an early death. Furthermore, the journal, *Lancet*, pointed out that unhealthy eating was linked to more ill health than physical activity, alcohol and smoking combined. In plain English, you cannot outrun a bad diet. Shockingly, a 2007 study found that it would require 91.5 hours of exercise per pound lost.

In the America that I love, it has been said, "If weight is your concern, you're much more likely to lose it in your kitchen than you are in your gym." But, if it is good overall health you seek, a combination of healthy diet and regular exercise is your best bet. Please check out my book, *Exercise & Reactive Oxygen Species: Likely the Only Health Miracle Out There*, available at www.amazon.com. Diet seemingly rules your weight gain or loss.

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