

The Answers to Your Metabolism



By Mark Spreizer, ACE Certified Personal Trainer

We've all heard the word lately. It's in the exercise and weight-loss infomercials on Sunday morning. It's printed on every bottle of "fat-burner" and even now on some vitamins. People are talking about how they need to "speed theirs up" or how they were "cursed with a slow one." But really what is metabolism? Why is it so important? Is it even *that* important? Is it true that some people are born with faster ones than others? Let's take a look.

In my years of experience, I've noticed that almost everyone has heard of metabolism, but very few truly understand it. In general terms, metabolism means *the speed at which the body burns through food*. To use a practical example, if two people eat exactly the same amount of food for breakfast, the person with the faster metabolism will burn off (convert the meal to energy and *use* that energy) faster than the person with the slower metabolism. This means that the person with the faster metabolism will be able to lose weight quicker, with less restrictions to their diet, and keep it off much easier.

It's important to note that a person's metabolism is not constant. It varies throughout the day depending on different factors. Two of these factors are *how often* the person is eating; and *what* they're eating. Think of metabolism as a furnace. In order to keep the furnace

burning strong, it is important to keep adding the right amount of fuel regularly, and to use the right type of fuel. This translates into eating the proper number of small meals throughout the day (usually six) and making sure those meals have the right ratios of macronutrients (proteins, complex carbohydrates, and fats). By doing this, one is eating to support their metabolism, not just to get full or feel better emotionally (we've all been there!).

Another important factor about metabolism is activity level. Numerous scientific studies show that metabolism is stimulated not just during, but also for hours after, high-intensity exercise. To make these workouts as effective as possible, they should consist of strength training and cardiovascular activity. Most people know that exercise is good and burns calories, but *few realize that the body continues to burn calories at an increased rate long after the workout is finished*.

Finally, the last factor to mention is the amount of lean muscle on the body. Muscle is a huge calorie-consumer. It requires more energy to maintain one pound of muscle on the body than any other type of tissue. Plus, fat is burned (converted to energy) in the muscles. These are great incentives to hit the weights, not to mention the added benefits of looking more athletic, toned, fit, and strong.

So what does this all mean? It means is that *we all possess the power to influence our metabolism positively through simple daily choices and lifestyle*. It is true that some people are born with faster metabolisms than others, but that's not the end of the story. With the help of a little proper guidance, education, and a plan, each of us has the potential to fire up our metabolism to burn fat all day long- and this can be done safely, naturally, and healthily.

Look for other informative articles from Mark in upcoming issues of Miami Family Magazine.



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