Dear Alice:

I am a 22 year old male who began weight lifting two years ago to get into shape. The problem is I'm still not in shape. I can lift huge amounts of weight, but instead of having a chiseled body, I still look like a fat guy. I mean, I'm big and strong, but I look like I was sculpted from lard (I'm 5'11 and 215 lbs). I do roughly 30 minutes of aerobic activity and about 90 minutes on the weights. Should I change my activity and diet to get leaner?

?No desire to be lard-boy

Answer

Dear No desire to be lard-boy,

Good for you for taking care of yourself by exercising! It may be frustrating to work so hard and not see the results you want, but you're on the right track. You may need to make changes to your diet and/or workout to look like a lean, mean, workout machine, but it may be best (and helpful) to do so under the supervision of a health care provider and/or a registered dietitian.

When we consume more calories than we expend, we gain weight. When the amount of calories consumed is less than the amount expended, we lose weight. Pretty straightforward, right? Maybe not. Additional factors may influence the amount of calories we burn, including genetics and body mass composition. Generally, however, eating a low fat, well-balanced diet that does not exceed your ideal caloric intake may be helpful for weight loss. A dietitian may be able to help you create a healthy, well-balanced food plan based on your specific dietary needs and personal goals. For more information, you can also check out the Go Ask Alice! Nutrition & Physical Activity archives.

Now let's talk workout. Have you considered asking a physical trainer for suggestions? In any case, you may want to consider incorporating more aerobic activity into your exercise regimen. Aerobic exercise, which gets your body to burn lots of calories, occurs when you move the big muscles of your body through space for 20 minutes or more (e.g., running, walking, biking). Increasing the amount of aerobic exercise you do in proportion to weight lifting may, therefore, help with taking off the extra fat. A tip: evidence suggests that you'll burn more calories during your aerobic workout if you hit the weight room first. Not a bad deal.

Whether you're sculpted of chiseled rock or, er? lard, positive body image is key. Although the media portrays a certain image of how we are supposed to look, we come in all different
shapes and sizes, and that's a good thing. Weight loss and sculpting may help you make positive changes to your lifestyle, but just make sure that it's not at the expense of your physical health and emotional well-being. So, while you're lifting weights or running on that treadmill, you may want to mull over whether you enjoy doing these activities, and how they make you feel.

For additional information, check out the Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults [4] on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website. Keep up the good work and good luck!

Alice!
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Related questions

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