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Q&A

[BY MATT BRZYCKI]

Does a sauna belt help to lose weight and melt fat?

One of the latest products popularized in a never-ending line of annoying infomercials is the so-called "sauna belt." But it's not a new idea. Sauna belts were introduced as early as the 1960s. Back then, it was simply a rubber wrap that secured around the waist. Today's high-tech version plugs into a wall socket and produces heat. Promoters claim that the sauna belt "melts fat." Can fat melt? Yes. But in order to do so, the body temperature would be so high that the brain would boil and blood would probably coagulate. Other claims with no scientific basis are that the sauna belt can "flush out and eliminate toxins" and "enhance metabolism." But perhaps the most outrageous claim is that a belt uses "600 calories in 30 minutes." To get the same caloric expenditure, a 165-pound person would have to run about 4.65 miles in 30 minutes — a pace of about 9.3 miles per hour.

Exercise performance is influenced by circadian rhythms.

Since the only physical effort expended is putting on the belt and plugging it in, a caloric expenditure that high is simply impossible.

A sauna belt will make a person sweat and, theoretically, this could produce a small amount of weight loss. But the weight loss is water loss, and water has no calories. And when people are instructed to set the belt to as much as 176 degrees to supposedly promote fat loss, is anyone surprised that there are countless reports from consumers who burned their skin?

Bottom line: A sauna belt is basically a glorified — and overpriced — heating pad. **FM**

Does the time of day affect exercise performance?

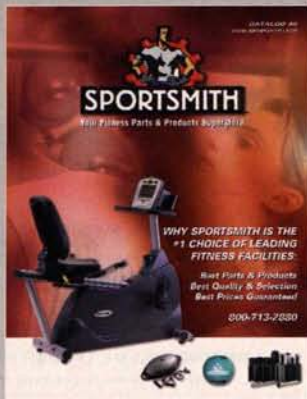
Many studies have looked at the effects that the time of day has on exercise performance. In one study, subjects performed an all-out test on a stationary cycle (which lasted about 60 seconds) in

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the morning (7:30 to 9:00 a.m.) and afternoon (4:00 to 5:30 p.m.). Performance in the afternoon was better than the morning in terms of the total amount of work, amount of anaerobic work and aerobic contribution. In another study, subjects performed a modified Wingate Test on a stationary cycle (which lasted 30 seconds) at 3 a.m., 9 a.m., 3 p.m. and 9 p.m. Performance in the afternoon and evening was better than in the morning in terms of peak power and anaerobic capacity. Researchers in another study looked at isometric and isokinetic torque (at five different velocities) during elbow flexion at 1 a.m., 5 a.m., 9 a.m., 1 p.m., 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. On average, the best results were produced from about 5:22 p.m. to 6:37 p.m., depending on the velocity that was tested.

Clearly, exercise performance is influenced by circadian rhythms — an “internal body clock” that repeats in cycles of about 24 hours. While this information is certainly interesting, it has little practical significance. For a variety of reasons, not everyone can work out based on the times studies reveal are best. Plus, some people simply prefer to exercise in the morning. The best strategy is for people to choose a time that best fits their schedule. **FM**

There is **no correlation** between soreness and workout effectiveness.

out was effective. Well, there is no correlation between soreness and effectiveness. If you fell on your shoulder, it's probably sore. But that doesn't mean that the soreness was the result of something productive.

People experience muscular soreness for a variety of reasons. For instance, your clients will probably be sore if they perform an unfamiliar activity or more activity than they are accus-

tomed to. Suppose that they haven't performed the incline press in months, but performed that exercise instead of the bench press; they will probably be sore tomorrow or the next day. The main reason is because they haven't performed the incline

press in a while. Or suppose that your clients increased their volume of training by performing either more exercises or more sets. Again, they will probably be sore tomorrow or the next day.

It's okay to work out even if soreness is present. In fact, exercise will help to alleviate the soreness more quickly than skipping a workout. A person who exercises while sore may not be able to perform as well as usual, but will be better off in the long run. **FM**

Is muscular soreness an indication of the effectiveness of a workout?

It's often said that muscular soreness is a sure sign that a work-

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