

**THE MYTH 'IF I LIFT WEIGHTS, I'LL PUFF UP LIKE ARNIE'**

**THE TRUTH** 'On a moderate training plan, building up excessive bulk is impossible,' says fitness trainer Liz Fulford (fulfordfitness.co.uk). Bodybuilders spend pretty much all day, every day, huffing dumbbells to achieve that look and it's no coincidence they tend to be male. 'The growth of muscle tissue is very dependent on testosterone,' says Liz, 'and women tend to produce ten times less than men, so you can't build big bulging muscles naturally.'

**THE MYTH 'I'D RATHER BURN FAT, AND CARDIO IS BETTER FOR THAT'**

**THE TRUTH** Cardiovascular exercise will burn a higher percentage of stored fat but, as Liz says, 'A muscular body is a more efficient body. For every additional pound of muscle you gain by lifting weights, your body burns around 50 extra calories every day.' Weights also temporarily lift your metabolic rate, thanks to a handy process called excessive post-exercise oxygen consumption (EPOC), which means your body continues to burn calories at a higher rate even when resting. That's why, in a study at Penn State University in the US, dieters who lifted weights as well as doing cardio lost 6lb more fat than the group doing aerobic work alone. And when it comes to boosting EPOC, just the one set will do. In another study, gym bunnies

# STOP dumbbell dodging!

Worried lifting weights will turn you into Mr Universe? Don't panic! Used correctly, they'll slim you down and tone you up

who did three sets of weights burned more calories during their workout than the group doing one set, but there was no difference in the number of extra calories burned afterwards – both got through a useful 100 calories.

**THE MYTH 'WEIGHTS DO NOTHING FOR YOUR HEALTH'**

**THE TRUTH** Lifting weights or using your body's own weight as resistance with squats, press-ups or lunges aids flexibility,

boosts joint stability, guards against injury and can help prevent osteoporosis. 'Lifting weights also has a positive effect on insulin resistance – so your body can convert carbs into energy more efficiently,' says Liz. 'It raises your metabolic rate by as much as 15%, reduces blood pressure and improves your mood. These are

factors that reduce your risk of diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.' OK, so it's definitely worth a try, then.

**THE MYTH 'TO TONE UP I NEED TO DO LOTS OF REPS USING LIGHT WEIGHTS'**

**THE TRUTH** 'To add definition, you need to lift heavier weights for a fewer number of reps,' advises Liz. The extra challenge increases the number of fibres from which muscles are made. For best results, opt for a mix of weights and rep ranges, remembering that the total number of reps should be at least 25. So you could do five sets of five reps at one session and two sets of 15 at the next, but choose a weight each time that allows you to complete all your reps without struggling until the last lift, and take a minute's rest between each set. Make sure your routine works your whole body equally at each session.



**TONING TIP** EPOC is higher in the fortnight before your period, so lift weights then to maximise calorie burn.