

ask THE EXPERTS



Every month, we are featuring the best questions from readers, which are answered by our expert advisory board. To submit a question, please tweet us @TSNmagazine or email ian.craig@targetpublishing.com. The best question next issue will receive a free bottle of Reflex 'The Edge' sports drink.

Q: "Functional Training with Pilates" discusses weight training combined with Pilates. How do I get the flat abs without getting big muscles?

Wendy Kerr @Wendy_Kerr



A: Weight training for women has so many advantages. Let me first say that you will not get big by lifting weights. Body builders take years with very structured routines and eating plans to achieve their physiques. As a recreational resistance trainer you will tone your muscles, decrease body fat, strengthen bones and increase your metabolism without gaining huge mass. There are other benefits as well such as healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Visualise a very simplistic picture of the body in layers with the skin being the first, followed by fat cells and then muscle below. As you increase your muscle mass, your fat cells will begin to shrink which means an overall toning and "slimming" effect around the body as these layers re-shape. This, along with the increased metabolism, occurs because muscles burn more energy than fat cells. The article was meant to convey the integration of the body as a unit rather than segments. The combination of mindfully working the core muscles whilst doing weight training moves plus the overall body benefits of lifting, along with a healthy nutrition plan should achieve the flat abs you are looking for. And again, I can assure you, as a woman lifting weights, you will not become huge like a body builder.

Charlene Hutsebaut @positivelyslim

Q: Hi Rachel. I am a trail runner and adventure racer. Could you shed some light on wash care instructions on heavily stained fabrics please? I'm so tired of always wearing black because of the dirt.

Katie Bingham



A: Hi Katie. Thank you for your question. If you have clothing that is stained from the outdoors, always make sure you follow the wash care label first. In other words, don't soak your item in boiling hot water if the maximum temperature allowed is 40 degrees Celsius. If your clothing is white and the label states no bleaching, make sure that you follow that.

Sports fabrics are made of small, individual threads that are intertwined and interwoven. When mud or any substance from the outdoors comes into contact with these filaments, it is soaked up by the fabric fibres just like it would wick perspiration from you. Sports fabrics normally have this type of moisture wicking property to keep you dry. What it means though, is that the mud is soaked up by the individual fabric threads, making the stain tougher to remove. The ideal way to deal with soiled fabrics is to remove the garment as soon as possible, so preferably once you have finished a race or a training session. Soak it immediately in eco-friendly detergent. The sooner you flush the fabric filaments from dirt the easier the stain removal process will be. Then you can gently rub the stain. Note that vigorous rubbing can weaken and even destroy filaments which can damage your garment.

Leave your item to soak overnight. Then wash the item in your washing machine on the maximum temperature that the fabric is allowed, NOT THE MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE OF THE MACHINE! Your clothing should be spotless after this soaking and washing process, especially if you have soaked your clothing immediately. Also, remember to hang clothes out of direct sunlight to prevent the colours from fading and keeping the white fabrics from turning yellow. Remember that heat (hot water) and direct sunlight damage fabrics!

Rachel Jesson (www.sportyskirtsrevolution.net)

Q: Green supplements like spirulina and kelp are supposed to make the body more alkaline – how does this happen?

Emily Sexton-Brown @EsextonBrown



A: Our ancestors would have consumed potassium alkaline salts in large amounts through the ample consumption of plant material. Contemporary diets appear to have switched salts to a much higher sodium chloride content with a resultant deficiency in potassium salts and consequently a net increase in systemic acid load on the body. It has been proposed that perhaps we as humans are suffering from the consequences of chronic, diet-induced, low-grade systemic metabolic acidosis. Dietary lifestyles can alter systemic acid-base balance over time. Acidic diets, which are typically high in animal protein and salt and low in fruits and vegetables, can lead to a sub-clinical or

low-grade state of metabolic acidosis.

Green supplements such as spirulina and kelp grow and flourish in an alkaline environment, so consuming these foods provides an abundance of alkaline minerals (chlorophyll, the green pigment found in most green supplements, is a rich source of the alkaline mineral magnesium) and helps provide a more suitable potassium to sodium ratio, more akin to our ancestors. By neutralising the diet-induced acid load through regular consumption of green foods and supplements and essentially eating more like our ancestors, we support not only skeletal health through decreased bone resorption, but also potentially help reduce the risk of a number of chronic diseases in our overfed-undernourished Western population.

Alex Kirchin

Q: Is there any genetic information to tell whether somebody is going to be an easy or hard-gainer in body building?

James Looker @James_R_Looker



A: It is a really interesting question and one that genetics is just at the beginning stages of answering. There are some individual genes that would theoretically allow certain people to gain muscle easier than others. I'll give you two examples: the first is the ACE gene, which is the most studied of all exercise genes in commercial use. It stands for Angiotensin Converting Enzyme and controls the dilation and constriction of blood vessels and therefore also blood pressure. One form of the gene codes strongly for power performance in athletes and the other form codes strongly for endurance. The power form would theoretically allow greater fast twitch muscle fibre development. The other gene is ACTN3 or actinin, which codes for fast twitch muscle fibres. The gene is either present or absent and research has shown the 'present' form of the gene to have a much higher prevalence in successful body builders than in general population. An exercise test has just been launched in South Africa with these genes in it – as a significant number of people become tested, it should reveal more knowledge about which genes and combinations of genes are most likely to be advantageous for muscle gain through body building.

Ian Craig