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Working out while wrapped in plastic — good for weight loss? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I've heard of body suits that increase sweating during exercise. Then I heard that Saran wrap had the same effect. I want to shed pounds but first I wanted to know if wrapping plastic wrap around the stomach helps burn fat during exercise.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Body suits, body wraps, plastic wrap, or any other formulated fashion that promotes perspiration does not lead to increased fat burning or fat loss. Perspiring profusely will cause you to lose a little water weight quickly, but this weight loss will not last and is not the same as losing body fat. In addition, suits that make you sweat can be unhealthy. Rubber "sweat" suits were banned by the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) after the deaths of three wrestlers in 1997. The athletes were attempting to lose weight by wearing these suits while exercising in hot weather. Many additional reports of similar close calls were reported after this news broke.

Body suits cause you to sweat like a moose in heat on a hot Texas prairie, but they don't allow the sweat to dry. Evaporation is important because it cools the body. As a result, wearing a body suit raises your body temperature, possibly to unsafe levels. This danger is compounded by changes in blood chemistry. A portion of perspiration originates from blood fluids. As you sweat more, blood volume is reduced, which limits the flow of oxygen to working muscles and organs. A two percent drop in body weight through fluid loss can produce significant changes in your body's response to exercise. Continued fluid loss may lead to weakness, dizziness, mental confusion, and even coma and death. That's why fluid replacement before, during, and after physical activity is essential.

For all exercise, dressing for success means wearing clothes that let your body breathe. It's probably best to wear clothes made of cotton, or polyester that pulls away from the skin.

Although the scale may register a weight loss from using this fad, a loss of body fluid does not reflect a loss of fat tissue. In addition, this weight loss will only be temporary and will return shortly after you have re-hydrated. As always, stick with a well-rounded diet and moderate exercise for optimal health.

Alice!

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