

The Biggest Fitness Myths in 2026

The big idea: Fitness advice is full of shiny new rules, fads and oversimplifications. The goal of this call was to put those claims into perspective so you can stop chasing the latest hack and focus on the fundamentals you can follow consistently for the long term.

THE MAIN MYTHS

1 Fasted exercise burns more body fat

You may use slightly more fat for fuel during a fasted workout, but the body compensates later. Over the day or week, fat loss comes back to the overall balance between energy used and energy consumed.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY

Train at the time that fits your life and helps you stay consistent. You do not need to exercise fasted.

2 Carbs are bad or fattening

Cutting carbs can cause a quick drop on the scales, because stored carbohydrate and the water stored with it fall too. That does not mean all the weight lost is body fat. Whole-food carbs are very different from processed ones.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY

Favour whole, fibre-rich carbs and pair them with a good protein source.

3 Workouts are for burning fat

A hard workout can feel like it is "burning fat", but that is not its most useful job. Nutrition and daily activity do most of the work in fat loss. Strength training builds muscle, strength, bone density and capability.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY

Stop judging a workout by the calorie number on your watch. Judge it by the adaptation it creates.

4 "It's just calories in versus calories out"

Energy balance matters, but "just eat fewer calories" oversimplifies it. A diet low in protein and fibre, and high in alcohol or ultra-processed food, makes sticking to the right intake much harder.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY

Aim for roughly 80% high-quality, filling food, with plenty of protein and fibre, at an intake right for your goal.

5 Zone 2 cardio is something everyone needs

Zone 2 can build an aerobic base, especially for endurance goals, but it is time-consuming. For women whose priority is looking and feeling better around menopause, strength, muscle and bone are the bigger gaps.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY

Don't feel you need long Zone 2 sessions simply because they are popular.

6 Cold plunges are a magic recovery tool

Cold-water immersion can reduce soreness, useful when performing again very soon. But right after strength training it may blunt some of the signalling involved in muscle adaptation.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY

If building or keeping muscle is the priority, ice baths don't need to be part of your routine.

7 Cortisol isn't a problem

The fitness industry swings from one extreme to another. Cortisol is not the sole explanation for weight gain or poor results, but managing total stress and recovery still matters around menopause.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY

Don't blame everything on cortisol, but do pay attention to sleep, recovery, life stress and training load.

8 More medium-intensity exercise is always better

Once a strength foundation is in place, a more "polarised" approach works better: plenty of low-intensity movement and strength training, plus occasional short, genuinely high-intensity sprint intervals (SIT).

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY

Quality and recovery matter more than simply doing more.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED ON THE CALL

How soon should I eat protein after a workout?

Protein within roughly 45 minutes can help, especially after morning training, but don't turn it into another rule to stress about. An hour or a little longer is fine. The bigger priority is a routine that gets a protein-rich meal or shake in reasonably soon.

What is SIT and how do I do it?

Sprint Interval Training: very short, near-all-out efforts (around 10–20 seconds) followed by much longer recovery, often 3–6 times the work period. Done on a bike, SkiErg or with suitable exercises. The long rest lets your heart rate drop so each effort is genuinely high intensity.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Don't let the latest fitness trend distract you from what consistently works. Prioritise progressive strength training, regular daily movement, high-quality nutrition with enough protein and fibre, sensible calorie intake, and adequate recovery. Add advanced methods only once they genuinely serve your goals. Consistency with the fundamentals beats constantly chasing the next "perfect" approach.