



Scales will make you fat.

Spring is here. It's getting warmer and now is the time that everyone wants to quickly lose those winter kilos for summer. As a Personal Trainer it's great to see people getting active and healthy, however I can't begin to tell you how frustrating it is to see people getting caught up with what they weigh on the scales, rather than focusing on a healthy lifestyle.



I believe that scales are ONE of many useful tools available to anyone who wants to lose weight. They help keep you on track and accountable if you weigh in on a fortnightly or monthly basis (it's a great way to catch those extra couple of kilos that have snuck up on you!). However, for anyone that gets caught up and obsessed over a particular number that they want to see on those scales, I believe that it can be incredibly self-destructive and will result in them failing to lose weight long term!

I know I may have touched a couple of nerves for some people and they would be already throwing up excuses as to why weighing in is such a critical thing "I know that it's not all about weight, but I really want to weigh x!" If you are one of those people I encourage you to keep an open mind whilst reading this article and let me share with you some of my own experiences and things that I see on a regular basis as a PT.

Scales will dictate how good (or more likely how bad) your day/week goes: For anyone that regularly weighs themselves (more than once a week), I want you to ask yourself what is it exactly you are achieving? In my opinion, weighing in chronically is setting yourself up to fail. Here's why: Before you jump on the scales you're all excited (or in some cases even anxious). Today is going to be the day that you've lost weight and you're secretly hoping for a ridiculous number like 2kg plus! You jump on the scales and one of three things will happen:

- a) You will have lost weight. YIPPIE! Now you begin running through what you could change to get an even better result next time (I could cut out this, I could train more etc). Seriously that's just ridiculous – what you are doing is working so stick with it. You don't need to change your training program or even what you're eating– keep doing what you're doing. I see quite often people getting caught up in the 'what's next' rather than taking a step back and acknowledging they've actually lost weight. In our quick fix society it really doesn't matter what we've lost on the scales it just isn't enough. My advice to you is – "get real", any loss is fantastic... And didn't your mother always say "if it aint broke, don't fix it!"
- b) You will have lost weight. YIPPIE! "I think as a reward I can have a 'relaxed' day". Morning tea comes around and you decide that you can splurge and have that muffin. After all why not, you've lost weight and it wasn't too hard to drop that weight (how quickly we forget when we're faced with temptation!) BAM! With that attitude it will mean that this week you have eaten additional calories because trust me, it'll be more than one muffin that you "deserve". That will mean that next week when you weigh in you'll have either maintained your weight or you will have put weight on because you've eaten more calories than you need. So now you'll get upset and get frustrated and feel disappointed which will more than likely result in.....





- c) The other alternative is that you jump on the scales all hopeful and you instantly get that sinking feeling in your stomach. You've either stayed the same or you've put on weight. Rather than looking at the logical side of things (what could it be, water, sodium, time of day, dinner last night, how was my eating REALLY over the week etc) you allow yourself to get swept up in the emotion of it all and begin to allow yourself self-pity. "What's the point", "I've failed again", "After all that hard work and I don't have any results – why should I even bother"... So now the downward cycle begins – you go on a massive binge. At morning tea you have that muffin "I may as well, I was really good and "starved" myself last week and it didn't count for anything" and again the cycle continues. It's not just that one muffin you allow yourself, because at some point you 'wake up' and start to feel guilty about your binge because you know that didn't help you lose weight – and again you'll beat yourself up and go on a binge again.

I'm sure that everyone reading can relate to one of those points and have been there before. I find that I very rarely see people consistently use the results of the scales for good. Whenever I talk with clients (and again I've experienced it myself) so often I see that their day is determined by what that damn scale said (regardless of the outcome).

So if you can relate to any of the points above, question your mindset right now. Why on earth would you give so much urgency to weighing yourself when you know that it's going to mentally challenge you and will make it so much easier for you to sabotage your results?

You cheat yourself by not weighing in after a "bad week". Have you ever noticed how when you've had a bad week you just simply refuse to get on the scales? You know that you've put on weight and you won't jump on the scales and see the damage that you've done. I understand that you think that by seeing the numbers go up you'll get depressed and throw in the towel (no-one wants to see the numbers go up) but in all reality – get over yourself and get real! You know that you've had a terrible week and it's time you take responsibility and own up to it. By allowing yourself to play victim and not face the truth of the situation here are a couple of outcomes:



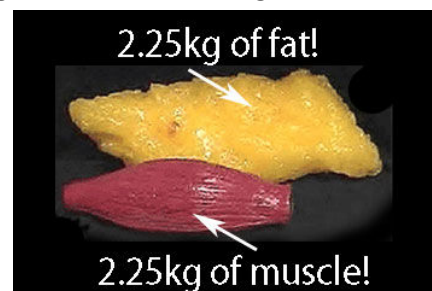
- a) You don't understand the full repercussions of what you've done, which means you're more than likely to do it again in a couple of weeks/months time. If you don't realise now how much weight you've put on and the damage you've done, in a couple of months there is no way that you'll remember the effects that your current binge had on your weight loss. So what will stop you next time from doing it? At least this time if you jump on the scales and see you've put a kilo on, you might stop and think next time before you start
- b) If you don't weigh yourself and evaluate that damage, when you jump on the scales next time you're going to set yourself up for disappointment. Let's say you've put on 2kg from your bad weeks. If you don't capture that, what will happen when in a couple of weeks you've lost that 2kg? You'll jump on the scales and be disillusioned because 'nothing has happened' since you last recorded. In reality you've lost 2kg which is fantastic but because you didn't write it down you will feel dejected. Also because you won't know that you've actually lost 2kg (in your mind it could be 100g or 5kg – you're only guessing) it'll give you the temptation to change up your current routine (even though what you are currently doing is working). So instead of the heartache and disappointment you're trying to put off by not weighing in, suck it up at the time and that way at least you'll know that you've put on weight and can then be happy and congratulate yourself on your loss because you know exactly what it is!





Scales don't give you the full picture. When you weigh in, most people's scales will only give them a number (what they weigh in kg). For weight loss that isn't the full picture of where you are really at. Most people know that muscle weighs more than fat, but when they jump on the scales they forget that or they don't realise what it really means (because they're too caught up in the number).

To help clear up any confusion I've included a picture that shows 2.25kg of muscle and 2.25kg of fat. Now you can clearly see what the difference is. There is a massive difference in the mass or size of fat. As you can see fat is all bulky and huge, however for less than ½ the size the picture shows you 5 pounds of muscle. They both weigh the same, yet the size of the fat is double! Now does it start to make sense why you can be exercising and putting on muscle, losing fat but the scales may not go down as quickly?



Muscle is incredibly important for anyone that is looking to lose weight. The more muscle you have in your body the easier it is for you to lose weight, because the body has to work harder you'll burn up more energy. Simply put, the more energy you burn up, the quicker you'll lose weight. And that doesn't even begin to touch on all the great things muscle helps like prevention of osteoporosis, overall health and fitness, strength for your day to day activities and for anyone losing weight, toning up.

For anyone that is still not convinced and thinks that what you weight is more important, I'll ask you this – Does that mean when you lose weight you'd rather be fat and flabby but weigh less, as opposed to weighing slightly more (but less than you do now) but look healthy, trim and toned? Because that is exactly what you're saying if you believe that scale weight is more important than dropping cm!

Scales aren't consistent & there are too many things that can affect the outcome:

You would have heard me rattle this off a million times. Scales are just so inconsistent in their readings that if you are using it on a daily basis (or numerous times of day) you're setting yourself up for failure. Because you get so caught up in the emotion of what the scales say you tend to dismiss the variables that can affect your reading. Here is just a couple of things to demonstrate why there so inconsistent: Are you standing on a hard flat surface, are you scales stored in the bathroom (where there is steam/heat etc that can affect the readings), are you measuring at the same time of day, how are your hydration levels, are you retaining fluid, how is your sodium intake, are you stressed, have you been sleeping well, have you been to the toilet, for the ladies is it that time of the month, what did you have for dinner last night... That is ELEVEN things that you need to take into consideration and WILL affect your reading.

If you don't believe me here is a test for you. I want you to weigh yourself 5 times throughout the day. In the morning, in the mid morning, lunchtime, afternoon, evening, before bed etc. Check out the HUGE variance in the reading. Now let's relate that back to why it can set you up for failure. If you happen to weigh in on one of those "heavier times" we've already discussed above the negative effects that can have on your thought processes and the negative effect that can have on your day!





Results take time to show up. In today's society quick fixes are shoved down our throats. Lose 10kg in 5 weeks, take this pill, drink this shake – and it's all a load of bull! Real results that stay off will happen once you've committed to a lifestyle choice you can stick to for the rest of your life. It's not just one good "smash" session or "2 weeks of good eating". When you stick to a consistent healthy plan the results will start to show. People also need to realise that results can take time to translate on the scales / tape measure and clothes. Just because you had a great week, it may not show on the tape measure or on the scales for another week. For me personally, it takes me two weeks for my results to show. So for example, let's say that this week I was absolutely fabulous, ate really well, exercise intensely and did everything right. If I jumped on the scales this time next week and expected a great result, I'd be disappointed (and that's when in the past I would throw in the towel). I've learnt that my body takes time to catch up and for me it takes two weeks to see those great results.



So here is my question to you, do you know how long it takes your body to show results? If you don't – why don't you? It's your body and you're the only one that will know this information and the only one that can keep you fit and healthy. I encourage you that if you are really serious about being healthy and losing weight, have realistic expectations of what you want to achieve and start to listen to and watch how your body responds.

So to summarise as I said above, I believe that scales can be a useful aid in the overall attack on weight loss however they are NOT the only resource available to you. Too often I see people get sucked into what the scale says and I get so frustrated for them because I know the detrimental effects it will have to their long term success.

Long term you need to focus on what you're body is doing. How is it feeling, are your clothes fitting you better, how are your energy levels and motivation? If you are serious about your health, you need to lose the obsession with what the number on the scales say and change your focus to more important things (like wow I can now run around with the kids, I can finally run again, my day to day activities are so much easier etc).

Because realistically what does a number on the scales REALLY mean anyway?

It's just a number that really doesn't mean a lot. You don't share your number with anyone, you don't 'put it on a business card or a t-shirt for everyone to see, so why are you being so obsessed about it? Why are you letting something that is really end of the day irrelevant thing dictate how YOUR life goes?

Remember: Don't wait for it to happen - MAKE IT HAPPEN!

Happy Health & Fitness

Amanda xx

