

Shrink holiday belly with cardio, strength training

By Amanda MacMillan, Outdoor

Ah, the middle-age-man belly. You can try to run it off, but cardio alone won't be nearly as successful at battling the bulge as combining cardio with strength training, says a study published in the journal *Obesity*.

As we get older, our bodies tend to lose muscle mass and hold onto fat, says Rania Mekary, the study's lead author. So while cardio may still help you lose weight, some of that weight loss may come from muscle rather than from the fat accumulating around your midsection.

Strength training, on the other hand – either with free weights, machines, or resistance bands – builds lean muscle while also helping to burn fat. In Mekary's study, men over 40 who added 20 minutes of weight training to their daily routines had less of an increase in age-related abdominal fat over the next 12 years than men who added 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity.

"You have to do a lot more cardio to cover the benefits of just a little bit of weight training," she says. In fact, study participants who lifted daily all fared about the same, belly fat-wise, regardless of whether or not they got the recommended 25 minutes per day of aerobic exercise as well.

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