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Why Spot Reduction Doesn't Work

People ask all the time, "What's the best exercise to get rid of this?" (as they point to an area of their body they feel is a bit too flabby) Infomercials are always promising to "burn fat" off of your belly, your butt, or your thighs. This drives me (and most likely all fitness professionals) crazy because doing specific body part exercises will definitely help to strengthen that muscle but you cannot "spot reduce" fat.

Burn, baby, burn

Yes, you definitely *feel* your abdominal muscles when you do crunches or your glutes when you do an exercise to target them. The "burn" you feel is because those muscles are exerting a lot of energy NOT because you are burning fat. So doing abdominal crunches does not mean you are burning abdominal fat. If your abdominal fat is resistant to mobilization then it will probably be the last fat to be mobilized and utilized. (I know, you didn't want to hear that) You will likely notice changes to your arms and other areas and start to wonder why the fat around your stomach (or hips) isn't cooperating. Be patient, eventually it will happen!

Then why do we use spot specific exercises?

As a trainer I ask clients to do specific exercises for core, glutes, arms, etc. The reason is to strengthen those muscles. There are many muscles that become weak when humans spend too much time sedentary and to avoid injury a strong core and glutes are important.

What else can you do?

A combination of aerobic exercise, interval training and muscle-conditioning will get you mobilizing that unwanted body fat. Eating a healthy diet is also crucial to reducing your body fat. If you need help figuring out what to eat and when to eat it be sure to schedule a SMART Loss appointment to discuss this. Don't try to change everything all at once, instead pick one thing you are going to do differently this week and make it a habit.