



Weekly Tip:

Did you know that you can reduce the fat and calories in your ground beef by almost 50% simply by rinsing it after cooking? We use ground beef all the time. I buy lean ground (20% fat) - I NEVER buy extra lean. Brown it - drain it in a metal colander and then rinse it well with very hot water. Return it to the pan and season.

Voila! Not only did you save your family from ingesting unnecessary saturated fats and calories—you just may have saved yourself some money by not having to buy leaner cuts which are more expensive. Ground beef can be a great addition to a healthy well balanced lifestyle. It is so incredibly versatile and kid-friendly that I couldn't imagine my life without it!

If you aren't browning it—and forming it before cooking like burgers—just remember to cook it a way that it can be well drained. Indoor grills and BBQs are great for this. Cooking meatballs on a rack helps too! Tacos away my friends!

It's a running joke in my fitness classes that I HATE, I mean LOATH running! It is true—surprising I know, but yes, my name is Michele and I am a fitness instructor that hates to run! Yep it is true! String me up!

When I was in Law Enforcement training—all we did was run—I hated it then but did it because I had to. I don't have to anymore so I don't. But that doesn't mean that I don't get some great cardio workouts in. People are usually surprised to hear that my classes—especially my boot camp classes—have very limited running involved. Some are relieved some are disappointed but that is just the way it is and the way it always will be.

I don't like running because I find it very hard on the joints—knees, ankles and hips. You see I am a big girl—5'8" and 165 lbs. I carry a lot of muscle weight and that weight pounding down on those joints is just a little too high-impact for my liking and if I can't stand it—my clients (remember I specialize in obesity) really don't like it—and I find that unless someone is training for a specific sport or event, running just isn't necessary in a fitness program. That is my story and I am sticking to it!

Well Balanced?

So running aside—what should a well balance fitness program consist of? Well my ideal is to combine aerobic exercise with resistance training (muscle building) and flexibility. They are all very and equally important as part of a total body fitness program and these three components make up every single one of my boot camp classes.

Aerobic Exercise—The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) defines aerobic exercise as "any activity that uses large muscle groups, can be maintained continuously, and is rhythmic in nature." It is a type of exercise that overloads the heart and lungs and causes them to work harder than at rest. Aerobic activities can include things like (OK, OK) running, bicycling, aerobic dance (think step aerobics, zumba, and classic 'aerobics'), skating, swimming, stairs (step aerobics), skiing, skating—you get the point. Ideally we should all be getting a minimum of 150 minutes of medium intensity aerobic activity a week. When I say medium—I mean heart pounding, sweat breaking, a little short of breath.

Resistance Training - Resistance training is any exercise that causes the muscles to contract

against an external resistance with the expectation of increases in strength, tone, mass, and/or endurance. The external resistance can be dumbbells, rubber exercise tubing, your own body weight, bricks, bottles of water etc. Resistance training should be progressive and included in your regular fitness program working the major muscle groups 2 to 3 times per week. You can even use your own body weight as resistance—think squats, lunges and crunches in addition to 'pumping iron'.

Flexibility training is also essential to a well balanced program. More than just relaxation, proper stretching should be done after every workout to release the buildup of lactic acids in the tired muscles. Proper flexibility also gives us more freedom of movement, reduces the risk of injury during everyday life and lessens the strain on our joints from tight, pulling muscles.

Make sure that whatever fitness program you decide on, it combines these three essential elements. Don't ignore any of them, they are all as equally important and will work together for your overall health and weight loss.

Recipe Corner

Delicious and nutritious snack and meal ideas that are perfect for the whole family!
Straight from Michelle's kitchen!



Michelle's Sheppard's Pie

This is one of my favourite 'go to' recipes for a busy life. It can be made in advance and put in the oven on a timer to be ready when you walk through the door! Served with a glass of milk—it covers all of the food groups in just one dish!

Wash 6 large potatoes (about 2 lbs) and cut up into 8ths—boil until *very* tender. Leave the skin on! This is the healthiest part! - Whipped your cooked potatoes with a hand or stand mixer until light and fluffy—add milk if needed for texture. Set aside.

Brown 2lbs of lean ground beef until well cooked—drain in a metal colander and rinse thoroughly with hot water. Return to pan—add fresh diced mushrooms and onions (to taste) along with garlic, basil and oregano. Cook until onions are translucent. Set aside.

In a separate pot—bring 2 cups of water to a boil. Add 2 tablespoons (or to taste) of low-sodium beef bouillon and thicken with cornstarch or use a packaged gravy mix (low sodium) - I use Bisto.

In a casserole dish, put a generous layer of frozen or fresh peas and/or carrot slices—top with ground beef, top with gravy. Add Mashed potatoes on top. Cover. Bake at 350F until potatoes are browned—about 35 minutes if cooked right away, about an hour if cooked from the refrigerator or on a timer. Supper is ready!

Are you Nuts???

People are often perplexed when they find out that my absolute favourite food in the entire world - the thing that I would choose if I could only eat 1 food for the rest of my life - is peanut butter! Yep. Peanut Butter. In my opinion, the world's most perfect food. I am always guaranteed to hear, 'But it is so high in fat!!' as people look at me like I am nuttier than my favourite spread. I try really hard not to roll my eyes as I explain yet again the powerful nutritional value of nuts and how they should be a staple in everyone's diets!

Yes it is true that nuts are high in calories (anywhere from 150-200 per ounce) and are high in fats... BUT they are high in the health monounsaturated fats. They are high in fibre, protein, vitamin E, folic acid, magnesium—the list goes on and on.

Adding just 1 ounce of nuts to your daily snack (about 30 nuts) has been shown to lower bad cholesterol levels, raise good cholesterol, reduce the risk of heart disease by a whopping 35%,!

The best part of being nutty? Regular consumption of nuts can actually promote weight loss. Why? Because it IS high in all of those healthy fats! Fats of any kind take longer to digest than proteins and carbs—making you feel fuller faster and longer which reduces how much you eat!

Everyone who knows me knows that peanut butter sandwiches are a regular part of my diet. I even make my own trail mix for snacks—add nuts to my granola bars and even use peanut butter as a dip for apple slices (what my daughter had for breakfast this morning) and a spread for celery sticks. I could live on peanut butter if I had too.

Now don't go taking this as an excuse to pack away nuts like a hormonal elephant—there is a trick to consuming nuts without sabotaging your weight loss efforts—remember, as healthy as they are—they ARE high in calories. The trick is 9as in everything), portion control. There are approximately 30 nuts in an ounce—that may seem like a lot but if you are mindlessly popping them into your mouth—it's not.

Make sure that when you are adding nuts to your meal plan—you portion them out if eating them alone. Ensure that you are buying whole (shelled yourself) which are best as you will eat less because they take longer to get to or dry roasted with no added salts or seasoning. You can even get low sodium peanut butter.

Nuts are best added to lunch and afternoon snacks—because that is the time of day that we usually feel the energy lag—nuts will take care of that providing us with slow-released energy and keeping us feeling full so we are less likely to snack throughout the day.

You can also add nuts to your regular meals - cashews and peanuts in stir fries, almonds in salads, sprinkled on yogurt and added to cereal, hot and cold are just some of the ways that we enjoy going nuts at our house.

Don't be afraid of nuts any longer (unless you are allergic) - get a little nutty, it will do wonders for your health!