Diet vs. Exercise – Which is More Important?

The question of which is more important, diet or. exercise is an interesting one. Usually this question is asked of me in the context of weight loss. Although they are both important, when it comes to kick starting your weight loss, diet is king. That's not to say exercise isn't an important part of the weight loss equation - it is, and I'll explain why later - but you just can't exercise your way out of a bad diet. Many people are under the false belief that if they exercise they have a free pass to eat whatever they want and how much they want. They spend hours in the gym working out and don't understand why they aren't seeing results. When they talk to me about it I always ask "what's your diet like?" More often than not they their diet isn't as clean as it should be to achieve their weight loss goals. If you tracked the calories in that slice of cake or cookie you consumed compared to what you typically burn in a moderate activity workout you'd quickly see that the gains from the workout are virtually cancelled out from the dessert. This is why your diet is so important when it comes to weight loss. I'm not saying don't ever eat a treat or some of your favourite foods, you can, in moderation. But remember that just because you exercised doesn't mean you've earned a treat every night of the week.

In addition to helping you manage your weight, a healthy diet ensures you are getting all the necessary nutrients your body needs to help keep your energy levels up, your hormones balanced, maintain healthy skin and hair, balance your mood, foster healthy gut bacteria and boost your immune system.

Exercise, though, is also important. Along with proper nutrition, it will help support you in your weight loss efforts by increasing the number of calories you burn. Your calorie burning efforts are further enhanced when you build muscle through resistance training. Muscle is metabolically active tissue which keeps your metabolism boosted and as a result your body burns more calories at rest! In addition to increasing caloric burn to assist your weight loss goals, exercise has health benefits as well. It increases insulin sensitivity, meaning that your body is more sensitive to the release of insulin so your pancreas will not have to work so hard to pump out high amounts of insulin for your cells to absorb blood glucose. Increased insulin sensitivity can help mitigate type II diabetes and control belly flab since high insulin levels are associated to weight gain around the middle. Exercise also helps to promote sleep (provided you don't do it too close to bed time), improve your mood, boost your energy, increase blood flow, reduce bad cholesterol, increase bone density and help manage a wide range of health problems.

So in answer to the question, which is better diet or exercise, they both play an important role in maintaining optimal health. The key is ensure you are maintaining a healthy diet in order to shed those pounds you desire and to add exercise to build muscle for shape and definition and to increase the calorie burning potential of your body.