

# Week Four: losing fat, not weight is top priority

*Joe Ferry*

Almost a month ago, when I took my first baby steps on what promises to be a life-long journey to physical fitness, personal trainer Fernando Paredes warned me not to get too hung up on what the scale says.

Like most people, I had approached him looking for help with losing weight.

"The way your clothes fit will tell you if you're making progress," he said on more than one occasion. "People will let you know when they see a difference."

The number-one priority of a fitness program such as mine, he insists, should be to lose fat. If you do that, the weight will come off in due time, slowly but steadily, as my body turns from a genetically programmed fat-storing machine to a fat-burning machine.

The reason? Muscle burns more calories than fat. Hence, if you lose fat and gain muscle through exercise and proper nutrition, it stands to reason that you will lose weight.



At Fernando's Fusion Fitness Studio in Doylestown, most clients tell him they want to lose weight.

"Actually, they want to lose fat," he says. "They just don't know it."

When I weighed in earlier this week, I was mildly disappointed to see I had not lost any weight. In fact, after losing four pounds in the first two weeks, and despite a stepped up workout program

and sensible eating over the Easter holiday (no jellybeans or coconut cream eggs) I had gained two pounds, bringing me back to my starting weight of 245 pounds.

But after listening to Fernando for a few minutes, my sense of failure quickly disappeared. In fact, he said, the fact that I had gained some weight is actually a good sign.

"Your muscles are starting to hold more nutrients," he says. "The cells are becoming hydrated. Your body is starting to adjust."

And then, to prove his point, Fernando whips out a tape measurer and goes to work. In four weeks, I've lost nearly two inches off my waist and 1.5 inches off my chest.

Sure enough, I'm losing fat. So that's why my pants and shirts feel looser? Duh!

Indisputable signs of progress, he says.

"People who lose 30 pounds in 30 days lose weight but not fat," he says.

"Mostly, they lose water and muscle. And then they gain back what they lost and then some."

One of Fernando's favorite movies to illustrate his point about how the human body works is "Supersize Me" the documentary about Morgan Spurlock's experiment of eating nothing but food from McDonald's for 30 days. After gaining 24 pounds in just four weeks, it took him 15 months to get back to his previous weight.

The point? "Our bodies have no problem storing fat," says Fernando. "We've been doing that for thousands of years because our ancestors never knew where their next meal would come from. To lose fat, we have to trick our bodies into believing the next meal is right around the corner."

Do you have an inspirational fitness story to tell? Tips to share? I would love to hear from you. Drop me an email at [joeferry@buckscountyherald.com](mailto:joeferry@buckscountyherald.com).