

# Effect of Combined Resistance and Endurance Exercise Training on Oxidative Stress in Individuals with Obesity: A Literature Review

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## ABSTRACT

Obesity is a complex metabolic disorder characterized by excessive adiposity, chronic low-grade inflammation, and increased oxidative stress. These processes contribute to insulin resistance, endothelial dysfunction, and metabolic comorbidities. Training is a non-pharmacological intervention, with endurance training promoting mitochondrial function and cardiovascular health, and resistance training supporting gains in skeletal muscle mass, strength, and glucose metabolism. Recent studies indicate that combined resistance and endurance training may produce synergistic benefits by enhancing antioxidant defenses, reducing reactive oxygen species (ROS), and improving metabolic regulation. This narrative review synthesizes current evidence on the effects of combined training on oxidative stress in individuals with obesity, examining molecular mechanisms, biomarkers of oxidative damage and antioxidant capacity, and implications for metabolic health. The review highlights combined training as an effective non-pharmacological strategy to mitigate obesity-associated oxidative stress, restore redox balance, and improve overall metabolic outcomes.

**Keywords:** combined training; obesity; oxidative stress; reactive oxygen species; antioxidant defenses; literature review

## INTRODUCTION

Obesity is a multifaceted metabolic condition marked by excessive accumulation of adipose tissue [1] and is frequently accompanied by chronic low-grade inflammation and oxidative stress [2]. Reactive oxygen species (ROS) overproduction combined with impaired antioxidant defenses leads to cellular damage, insulin resistance, and endothelial dysfunction [3,4,16]. These disruptions also contribute to the emergence of comorbidities, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes [5].

Training is a fundamental component in the management of obesity [6]. Endurance training enhances mitochondrial function and cardiovascular performance [7], whereas resistance Training promotes gains in skeletal muscle mass, muscular strength, and glucose regulation [8,9]. Emerging evidence indicates that combining resistance and endurance training may produce synergistic benefits for metabolic health and oxidative balance [10,11]. Integrating these training modalities can potentially strengthen antioxidant defences, reduce oxidative damage, improve body composition, and optimize metabolic control [10,12].

This review aims to consolidate current research regarding the impact of combined resistance and endurance training on oxidative stress in individuals

with obesity. It explores the effects of combined training on regulating ROS levels, strengthening antioxidant capacity, and enhancing metabolic functions, including insulin sensitivity, endothelial health, and body composition. By summarizing these findings, the review underscores the potential of combined training as an effective strategy to counteract oxidative stress and obesity-associated complications.

## REVIEW CONTENT

### A. Obesity

A body mass index (BMI) of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or over is considered obese, whereas a BMI of 25 to 29.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup> is considered overweight [13]. A rise in body weight is not the only sign of excess adipose tissue. It increases the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and some types of cancer by creating a significant metabolic burden [14]. In addition to storing energy, adipose tissue is an endocrine organ that produces adipokines and inflammatory cytokines that promote systemic oxidative stress and persistent low-grade inflammation [15]. These metabolic disruptions form the basis for the pathophysiology underlying obesity-related complications [1].

### B. Oxidative Stress

Reactive oxygen species (ROS) damage cells and impair

physiological function when the body's antioxidant defenses cannot keep up with their production. This condition is known as oxidative stress. Usually generated during metabolic activities, ROS are crucial for cell communication and homeostasis, especially in mitochondria [43]. Environmental pollutants, poor nutrition, age, smoking, and high metabolic activity can all lead to excessive ROS generation. Superoxide dismutase (SOD), catalase, glutathione peroxidase (GPx), and non-enzymatic antioxidants like vitamins C and E can all be overpowered by this overproduction. This imbalance can damage lipids, proteins, and DNA, promoting inflammation, cellular dysfunction, and the development of various chronic diseases [45].

Biomarkers that represent both oxidative damage and the body's antioxidant defenses are frequently used to evaluate oxidative stress. Protein carbonyl content is used to quantify protein oxidation, while malondialdehyde (MDA) and thiobarbituric acid reactive substances (TBARS) are commonly employed to detect lipid peroxidation, which indicates damage to cell membranes [18,20]. While non-enzymatic antioxidants and total antioxidant capacity (TAC) offer a thorough assessment of overall redox status, enzymatic antioxidants, such as glutathione peroxidase (GPx), catalase, and superoxide dismutase (SOD), offer insight into the body's natural defense mechanisms [2,21]. These biomarkers are widely employed to investigate the effects of interventions, such as dietary changes, pharmacological treatments, and physical training, on oxidative stress. In particular, they are used in obese populations to assess how training modulates ROS production, enhances antioxidant capacity, and improves metabolic and cardiovascular health outcomes [22,23].

### C. Obesity and Oxidative Stress

Obesity is strongly connected to increased oxidative stress, which results from an imbalance between the body's antioxidant defense and the generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) [2]. There are various processes that contribute to this pro-oxidative situation. Mitochondrial malfunction, caused by nutritional excess, leads to electron transport chain overload and increased ROS production [17]. Chronic inflammation in adipose tissue, triggered by macrophage infiltration, exacerbates ROS generation. Cellular oxidative damage is exacerbated by deficits in endogenous antioxidant systems such as catalase, glutathione peroxidase (GPx), and superoxide dismutase (SOD) [2,18]. This increased oxidative stress causes lipid peroxidation, protein oxidation, DNA damage, and endothelial dysfunction, which all contribute to insulin resistance and the development of obesity-related comorbidities [19,3].

### D. Effect of Endurance Training on Oxidative Stress in Obesity

Walking, cycling, and running are examples of continuous, rhythmic motions of large muscle groups that improve cardiovascular health and overall metabolic performance [24,25]. At the cellular level, it activates mitochondrial biogenesis via the PGC-1 $\alpha$

pathway, increasing mitochondrial density and enhancing oxidative phosphorylation efficiency [26]. This adaptation lowers the production of reactive oxygen species (ROS) per unit of ATP generated by reducing electron leakage from the electron transport chain [27]. Additionally, endurance training increases the activity of enzymatic antioxidant systems such as superoxide dismutase (SOD), glutathione peroxidase (GPx), and catalase [28]. Reactive oxygen species (ROS) are briefly produced during endurance training due to increased oxygen consumption in the mitochondria. The nuclear factor erythroid 2-related factor 2 (Nrf2) pathway, which stimulates the transcription of genes encoding important antioxidant enzymes like superoxide dismutase (SOD), glutathione peroxidase (GPx), and catalase, is one of the cellular signaling pathways activated by this controlled oxidative challenge [46]. Furthermore, endurance exercise enhances mitochondrial biogenesis and improves oxidative phosphorylation efficiency by upregulating peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor gamma coactivator 1-alpha (PGC-1 $\alpha$ ). This further reduces ROS leakage per unit of ATP generated. Over time, these molecular adaptations lead to elevated enzymatic antioxidant activity, strengthening redox homeostasis and protecting cells from oxidative damage [47].

Beyond molecular effects, endurance training improves tissue oxygenation, skeletal muscle glucose uptake, and insulin sensitivity [29,30]. Together, these adaptations reduce mitochondrial substrate overload and limit ROS production [31]. By lowering pro-inflammatory cytokines, including TNF- $\alpha$  and IL-6, it further reduces systemic inflammation [32]. Chronic endurance training has been demonstrated to improve metabolic outcomes and reduce oxidative stress in obese persons by raising total antioxidant capacity (TAC) and lowering oxidative damage indicators like malondialdehyde (MDA) and TBARS [33, 34].

### E. Effect of Resistance Training on Oxidative Stress in Obesity

Resistance training, such as weightlifting or bodyweight training, primarily promotes skeletal muscle growth and strength [35]. The increase in muscle mass improves glucose utilization and insulin sensitivity, thereby decreasing mitochondrial substrate overload and limiting reactive oxygen species (ROS) production [36]. Moreover, resistance training boosts the activity of antioxidant enzymes, including catalase, glutathione peroxidase (GPx), and superoxide dismutase (SOD), which work together to eliminate reactive oxygen species (ROS) and protect cellular components from oxidative damage [37].

Resistance training stimulates enzymatic antioxidant defenses through repeated metabolic and mechanical stress on skeletal muscles. Reactive oxygen species (ROS) generation is elevated during resistance exercise due to the increased energy demand. ROS serves as a physiological signal to activate cellular defense pathways. One such mechanism is the nuclear

factor erythroid 2-related factor 2 (Nrf2) pathway, which upregulates genes encoding antioxidant enzymes, including catalase, glutathione peroxidase (GPx), and superoxide dismutase (SOD), and translocates to the nucleus in response to oxidative stress [48]. Additionally, resistance training induces adaptations in mitochondrial function and density, improving oxidative phosphorylation efficiency and reducing ROS leakage per unit of ATP. Mechanical stress from muscle contraction also activates signaling pathways associated with hypertrophy, including MAPK and AMPK, which can indirectly enhance antioxidant enzyme expression. Over time, these adaptations collectively increase enzymatic antioxidant activity, strengthen redox homeostasis, and protect muscle and other tissues from oxidative damage [49].

In addition to molecular adaptations, resistance training enhances musculoskeletal health, metabolic function, and overall physical capacity, which are particularly advantageous for individuals with obesity [38]. Research has shown that long-term resistance training lowers oxidative damage markers, such as malondialdehyde (MDA), while increasing total antioxidant capacity (TAC) [39,40]. By reducing oxidative stress and improving metabolic regulation, resistance training helps prevent obesity-related complications and complements endurance training when performed in combination [41].

#### **F. Effect of Combined Resistance and Endurance on Oxidative Stress in Obesity**

Combined training incorporates both endurance and resistance training within a single program, aiming to leverage the complementary benefits of each modality. This approach simultaneously enhances cardiovascular fitness, skeletal muscle mass, and metabolic function, providing a comprehensive strategy for obesity management [42]. Physiologically, combined training exerts synergistic effects by improving mitochondrial efficiency and antioxidant defenses through endurance training (26,28), while promoting muscle hypertrophy and metabolic capacity via resistance training [35,36]. Studies indicate that this dual approach is more effective than single-mode training in modulating oxidative stress, reducing lipid peroxidation, increasing enzymatic antioxidant activity, and enhancing total antioxidant capacity (TAC), underscoring its potential to improve overall metabolic health in obese individuals [41].

#### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, through a variety of mechanisms, combined resistance and endurance exercise successfully reduces oxidative stress in obese people. Chronic ROS overproduction, mitochondrial dysfunction, weakened antioxidant defenses, and inflammation mediated by adipose tissue are all facilitated by obesity and result in DNA damage, lipid peroxidation, protein oxidation, and metabolic dysregulation. Combined training leverages the complementary benefits of endurance and resistance training: endurance training enhances

mitochondrial efficiency and upregulates enzymatic and non-enzymatic antioxidant systems, while resistance training increases skeletal muscle mass, improves glucose uptake, and strengthens endogenous antioxidant defenses. Together, these adaptations reduce oxidative damage markers, such as malondialdehyde (MDA), and improve total antioxidant capacity (TAC), thereby restoring redox balance and improving metabolic function. These findings highlight combined training as a highly effective non-pharmacological intervention for alleviating obesity-associated oxidative stress and its related metabolic complications.

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