

by Shari Held



WHETHER YOU'RE JUST embarking on an exercise program or you're on a first-name basis

with the trainers at your gym, you may not be getting the most out of the time you spend breaking a sweat. Here are the top six ways people sabotage their exercise programs.

❖ Not pacing yourself

"The biggest mistake that can lead to injuries is trying to do too much, too soon," says Jiff Sraders, MD, with Orthopedic Surgeons of Central Indiana, which is affiliated with Community Health Network. "People who have been inactive for several months try to jump right back in where they stopped." Even top athletes often don't realize just how much they need to ease up when getting back into a fitness routine after just a short period of inactivity, say doctors.

Rushing into things can torpedo your fitness plans, leading to exhaustion and soreness that will plague you over the long haul. It can also actually decrease your weight-loss results. "If you keep working outside of your aerobic heart zone, your body will not let go of extra fat," says Miriam Resnick, a certified Pilates/yoga/gyrotonic trainer with Mindful Movement Studio. "It will hold onto fat because you are working at too high a rate for your body to utilize your stored fat for energy. Just because you are not gasping for breath doesn't mean you are not getting a good workout."

❖ Falling into a rut

"Runners get chronic injuries because all they do is run," says Chris Lutz, co-owner of Bob Block Fitness Equipment. "You can make what you like to do most the cornerstone of your routine, but add some variety. If you do the same thing over and over, your body can wear out."

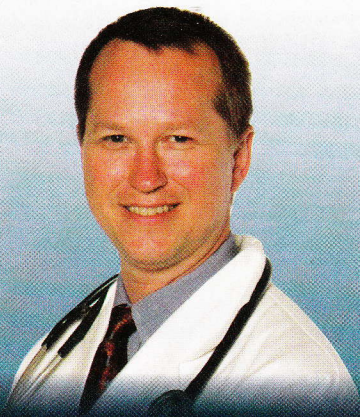
Besides raising your risk of injury, repetition leads to diminished returns over time as your body acclimates to the activity. "When that happens you have to introduce more intensity, more duration, or more frequency to improve results," says Lutz.

Six Workout Mistakes

These fitness faux pas may be slowing you down while upping your risk of injury.

MAJOR Sports Medicine

A MAJOR HEALTH PARTNER



Gregory Howard, MD
SPORTS MEDICINE SPECIALIST

Relieving Joint Pain & Improving Performance

Conveniently located
minutes from downtown
Indianapolis on I-74

reNovo
Orthopaedics Center

ORTHO-RENOVO.ORG
317.421.2012

Experience the Major Difference

SHELBYVILLE

❗ Rushing the warm-up and cool-down

Yes, you know you should stretch first, but it can be tempting to jump right into your full-bore fitness routine, especially when you're pressed for time. That ups your risk of injury, says Chris Powell, MS, CSCS, USAW, the sports performance director for Velocity Sports Performance, a Clarian Human Motion Partner. "Warm muscles are more pliable, which diminishes the chance of strain or tearing the tissue."

In the past, traditional stretching exercises were recommended for warming up the muscles, but that's no longer the case. "Now you want to warm up with movement-based stretching, or what is called active and dynamic stretching," says Powell. "Those include body weight squats, arm circles, heel-toe raises, standing trunk twists, and maybe a couple lunges. Those movements loosen up the

Not sure how much you can handle? Err on the side of less weight, not more. "Whether it's standing arm curls, lunges, knee bends, or bent-over rows, select a weight that allows you to perform the exercise 15 times," says Lutz. "The last two or three reps should be a strain, but you shouldn't have to break form. If you can do only 10 repetitions, then your weights are too heavy. If you can do 20 repetitions with little effort, your weights are not heavy enough."

❗ Not using proper form

Bad technique is one of the most common workout mistakes, says Jonathan Shook, MD, a surgeon at OrthoIndy and the Indiana Orthopaedic Hospital. "Most people start working out without ever learning how they're supposed to do certain exercises, or how often."

A lot of us rely on workout videos for that information, but that's a mistake,

"Even some of the top athletes forget you can't just jump back into an exercise program after time away," says Dr. Craig Nadelson of Riverview Orthopedics and Sports Medicine. "A lot of people underestimate how far you have to scale back when you get back into it."

knee joints, shoulder joints, and the hips, and increase circulation so the blood can warm up the muscle tissue."

The end of your fitness routine is the best time for stretching, which can help you develop joint strength and prevent injury. "The perfect way to cool down is to hold the stretch for 10 to 20 seconds," says Powell. "When a muscle is tired or fatigued after exercising, it will allow you to stretch it better and help you maintain or achieve flexibility."

❗ Skipping the weights

Pumping at least a little iron is important, even if you aren't looking to bulk up. "You need to do some weight training, even if it's just with light weights," says Lutz. "It can be the centerpiece of weight management programs because it increases your metabolism and helps your body become more efficient at consuming fuel."

says Resnick. "It's very difficult to get everything you need from a video, including proper form," she says. "Improper form leads to undue stress on joints and muscle imbalance. You need to be working with a professional and use videos only as a backup."

❗ Being too faithful with the workouts

So you're front and center at step class four days a week? You'll benefit from a break every now and then, ideally two to four weeks off every four months, says Craig Nadelson, DO, a primary sports medicine physician with Riverview Orthopedics and Sports Medicine. "Most people don't do it because it goes against common-sense thinking," he says. "But the body needs time to rest and rejuvenate, and not giving yourself any downtime actually hinders your progress." ●