

Avoid Overtraining: Getting the Rest We Need When We're Working at Our Best

By
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As the weather gets warmer and we prepare for bathing suit season, throngs march back into the gym to make up for those long winter nights on the couch. Some of you haven't stopped at all – training as hard in the spring and you do in the winter. Yet there is a very important yet overlooked topic: the importance of proper rest in your training routine, whether you are jumping back in or have been working hard for months.

Now let's talk about that rest. It is one of the most important aspects of keeping yourself healthy in any fitness and training program. Overtraining is serious business with serious consequences and occurs when the body can no longer handle to amount work it has to output. It can happen both with both anaerobic exercise (weightlifting) and aerobic exercise (running, biking, etc...). It is caused by three major factors – prolonged overload (going to heavy for an extended period of time), prolonged high intensity, and not enough rest in between to leave the body in a permanent state of fatigue. The consequences can be disastrous for anyone, and can lead to serious injury.

It's much easier to prevent overtraining than to treat it – and this is why proper rest is so important. There is a big difference from feeling tired after a workout and being consistently run down, especially at the peak of your training regimen.

Here are the major signs and symptoms to watch out for:

Physical Symptoms

- Excessive fatigue, lack of energy
- Muscle and joint soreness (unable to recover)
- Decreased immune system (more colds, sore throats, minor infections)
- Decreased performance / intensity
- Elevated resting heart rate
- Increase in minor injuries
- Headaches
- Decreased appetite
- Dehydration

Psychological Symptoms

- Depression
- Apathy
- Moodiness
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Loss of enthusiasm for training/sport
- Inability to stop exercise

What to do if you think you are overtraining? First reduce the amount or stop exercising entirely for a few days. Drink plenty of water and get plenty of rest – at least three to five days. If your symptoms persist, seek medical attention.

What you can do to prevent overtraining:

- Increase your load and intensity GRADUALLY.
- Get plenty of sleep
- Eat a well-balanced and nutritious diet
- Relax

Remember, exercise may be hard work but is also fun. But it's important to enjoy your downtime as much as your exercise. A well-rested body will get you farther than you could ever imagine.

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