

Fitness Program: What's Right for You?

Designing a fitness program begins by knowing why you're working out. Are you wanting to lose weight, add shape and tone, better your health or train for competition?

It seems like most people like to exercise because they want to look better, feel better and sleep better. Either way, taking care of your temple is a good thing. Some people are better at taking care of their spiritual muscles than their physical muscles or vice-versa. In either case, here are a few things you need to think about when designing your workout routine:

- How much aerobic cardiovascular training do you need?
- How much anaerobic strength training?
- How long should your training sessions be?
- Can your body handle the additional physical stress?
- Does your current health condition affect your training?

When it comes to getting fit and healthy, the name of the game is to train and diet smarter—not harder or longer.

1. Exercise can be a double-edged sword. It can be both stress-reducing and stress-producing. The more intense your workout, the more stressful it is on your body and the more cortisol and adrenaline you produce. Hitting a heavy bag or a going for a hard run may help you get rid of some anxious energy, but that intense workout will elevate your stress hormones. Can your adrenal glands handle that? Or are they already in a state of exhaustion due to all the stress in your life?

2. Exercise is a type of physical stress. Casual walking is exercise, but it's not that stressful. Weight training, burst training or aerobic training done incorrectly (the most common

mistake) is stress-producing. Are you exercising and physically taxing a body that is already exhausted?

3. Exercise is when you tear down the muscles. It's called the catabolic or breakdown phase. Only about 15-20 percent of your results will come from the workout. About 70-80 percent of your results will come from diet and rest. This is termed the anabolic growth phase. Don't overemphasize the workout and undercut the need for a good diet and additional rest and sleep.

4. The quicker you lower your stress hormones after a workout, the quicker the anabolic growth phase begins. Don't assume your stress hormones automatically drop back to normal after your workout. If you're hustling to the shower, wolfing down a shake or meal, or speeding out the door in a constant hurry, I can almost guarantee you that your stress hormones are staying elevated—in which case you are slowing down the start of the rebuild growth phase.

5. The more intense the workout, the more testosterone (TT) and growth hormones (GH) you produce. These hormones help you burn fat, lose weight and keep you feeling young. This is, again, why you want to do some type of strength training or burst training: It allows you to kick up those two important hormones. Strength training doesn't have to be long—it just needs to be intense! If you don't stress the muscle, it has no reason to change. Short, intense workouts are all you may need.

FYI: When your adrenal glands are depleted and fatigued, they are not going to produce as much TT and GH. This is why it's a good idea to measure your cortisol levels, especially if you've hit a plateau and are dealing with prolonged stress.

6. More exercise, more stress = more rest. Sleep and exercise are the two best ways to pump up your testosterone and growth hormones. So you have to give your body a chance to rebuild

itself. Are you giving yourself additional rest to offset the additional physical demands on your body? If not, you will deplete and exhaust your adrenal glands. You want to feel tired and healthier after a good workout, not exhausted and frazzled, which happens to so many people whose adrenals are exhausted and overworked.

7. Aerobic deficiency and anaerobic excess is a common mistake. Performing your aerobic workout at too high an intensity level for your current level of condition turns aerobic conditioning into an anaerobic activity. This is another stress on the body. Only well-trained marathoners and tri athletes can train at 80-85 percent of the maximum heart rate and still burn fat. If that's not you, you should be training at 65-75 percent of your max heart rate. Otherwise you will be burning mostly carbs and lean muscle instead of stored body fats.

These are only a few of the things you need to consider. We haven't even discussed all the variables that come into play with regards to your health symptoms, because that will also determine how long or how intense you should workout. If you've been training and have hit that plateau and aren't feeling good after a workout, you need to think: Could your adrenal glands be exhausted?

There are so many variables to be reviewed in order to design an individualized health and fitness program. So buying a good pair of tennis shoes, joining a gym and taking a class is all great, but if you're not getting the results you expect, it would be smart to review all the variables that go into designing a health and fitness program.

Dr. Len Lopez is a nutrition and fitness expert and creator of the *Work Horse Fitness Trainer*. His background in natural medicine and strength training gives him that special insight to help those who are struggling to bring both health and fitness together. You can learn more or get a second opinion

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