

How Much Exercise Is Too Much

The experts can hardly agree on recommendations for a minimal amount of exercise, although the range is about 30 to 60 minutes most days, and even up to 90 minutes if you are trying to lose weight. The definition of "too much exercise" is an even more complicated matter, and has to do with the effect exercise is having on your health and well-being. Getting too much exercise is just as bad as getting too little exercise, since it can lead to long-term health problems and the disruptions in personal life that result from addiction and compulsive behavior.

For exercise beginners, it's easy to do too much too soon

Exercise professionals all agree that when starting a new exercise program, you must begin slowly and build gradually to avoid injury. It takes time for your body to adapt to the new demands you are placing on it. Cut back your exercise volume and intensity at the first sign of injury, and never increase training volume by more than 10 percent per week. If you have questions, a personal trainer or other fitness professional can help you get started. If you have health concerns, be sure to check with your healthcare provider before you add to your exercise program.

Take at least one rest day a week, and balance exercise with recovery

Peak performance results when you balance exercise with plenty of rest and good nutrition. Asking your body to do more than usual creates an overload. The overload stresses your body, and as your body recovers and adapts to the overload, you become stronger, more muscular, faster, or a better athlete in whatever capacities you are training.

Without rest, your body cannot adapt and performance suffers. So does your health. Symptoms of overtraining include the following:

- Decline in performance, e.g., you can't run your usual distance as fast as usual
- Change in mood, increase in fatigue, irritability, depression, apathy
- Persistent aches and pains Elevation in resting heart rate
- More frequent colds and flus, symptomatic of a depressed immune response
- Trouble sleeping
- In women, disruption of the menstrual cycle
- Overuse injuries, such as stress fractures and tendonitis

You can balance training and recovery in several ways. Take at least one rest day each week. Athletes may take several days off before an important competition. A day off doesn't mean you must stay in bed. just do something low intensity and different: walk on the beach, take your kids to the park or go for a swim. You can also increase performance and decrease risk of injury by alternating hard and easy days, and by cross training.

What if my goal is weight loss?

Your body still needs a day off every week to maintain health. And while experts recommend 60 to 90 minutes most days of the week to lose weight, you must begin slowly and build up to this level gradually. And like everyone else, you must cut back at the first sign of injury.

What if I am a competitive athlete in season?

Your coach has to train the whole team at one time, and training volume may be too high for you, especially early in the season. If you feel an injury coming on, see your athletic trainer right away. They will help the coach adjust your training schedule.

I need a lot of exercise to feel OK

Regular physical activity reduces feelings of stress, anxiety and depression, and can be a great way to unwind and relax. It can also be fun! But when exercise becomes the only important thing in your life, interfering with your job, family, school or health, then exercise has become an unhealthy addiction. Other signs of exercise addiction include no longer experiencing pleasure during exercise, an inability to take a day off from exercise, and exercising when sick or injured.

Sometimes people with eating disorders use excessive exercise to purge calories and lose weight. Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia can quickly develop into dangerous health problems, causing irreparable damage to your bones, muscles and other organs, and to your metabolism. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rates of any psychiatric illness. If you feel like your eating and exercise habits have taken over your life, see your doctor for a referral to a specialist who can help you out of this dangerous situation.

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