

5 Culprits Behind Your Fitness Plateau

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Whether you run, bike, swim or hit the gym for exercise, it's inevitable you'll hit a fitness plateau. You may not even realize it at first — you're so used to your routine that it's second nature. But, after a couple weeks or even months, you may feel like your body isn't responding the way it used to. Weights aren't feeling heavy, the distance you're running is starting to feel easy and you're not even out of breath after swimming laps.

“The human body is incredibly proficient at adapting to the stress that's placed on it,” says [Adam Rosante](#), founder of Strong(h)er. “Do the same thing for too long and you'll stop making progress.”

In order to prevent or push past this standstill, here are some possible fitness plateau culprits to lookout for:

1. YOU'RE WORKING OUT AT THE SAME INTENSITY LEVEL, OVER AND OVER

You like to stick with your routine because you're comfortable with it. "Now, that can be a great thing for mastering technique and improving skills," says Rosante, "but if you want your body to continue to make progress, you have to find ways of changing up what you're doing."

His suggestion? Have a plan designed specifically for your goals, that includes a variety for intensities, durations, movement patterns and modalities. "I like to tweak my workouts every week to make sure I'm pushing myself, and then I'll change things up entirely every three weeks."

2. YOU'RE RUNNING THE SAME FAMILIAR ROUTE

It's probably close to your home and it feels safe. Plus, you're still getting in your miles. But if you're looking at running as a way to lose weight, you may need to step out of your comfort zone. "That might mean increasing your distance overall," suggests Rosante. "It could mean turning your long, steady run into a series of sprints. It could mean adding in a few days of weight training. Or it could mean setting a time goal and pushing yourself to maintain a certain heart rate for the duration of that run."

3. YOU'RE COMPLETING YOUR LONG RIDE IN LESS TIME

Yes, it's exciting you're finishing faster, but it may just mean your route is becoming easier for you. Are you still sweaty when you finish? "In regards to running or indoor cycling, effective and efficient speed intervals are important in order to not plateau," explains Luke Lombardo, RRCA certified running coach, Ironman triathlete and master trainer at [Lagree Fitness](#) in Los Angeles. "You must continually change the speed interval workouts so your body doesn't adjust. Think about always keeping your body on its toes."

His suggestions? For running, have an easy run day, a tempo run day, as well as a track day. For both running and cycling, you have to accept that, on harder workout days, you will push past your threshold to work at a serious effort.

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4. YOU'RE SPENDING TWO-PLUS HOURS IN THE GYM, EVERY SINGLE DAY

It's all about a commitment to fitness, right? Wrong! "Overtraining can be detrimental to your progress and success," says Lombardo. "Rest and recovery play a huge role in fitness and are actually when your body changes. If you're not taking the proper amount of time off to let your body recuperate from the workouts you put it through, it won't be able to perform the way you want." Translation: You won't see progress.

His suggestion: Be sure you're getting at least eight hours of sleep a night, and fit at least one or two rest days into your workout schedule.

5. YOU WERE RECENTLY INJURED

Being hurt is never fun — especially when you're not able to workout. Because of that, many individuals return to fitness prematurely, before allowing their body to fully heal itself. "This can set you back significantly," explains Rosante. It opens up the chance for you to injure yourself further, or create muscle imbalances by overcompensating because you're still in pain.

"It's important to maintain great form through all your exercises," says Rosante. His suggestion if you're not able to? You may need to take more time off or see a medical professional or trainer to help you slowly work your way back from an injury in a safe manner.



About the Author

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