

Sometimes you need to take a break so your body can come back better and stronger.

# 5 Signs You're Working Out Too Much

Hitting the gym almost daily and still not seeing results? You may be overtraining. Here's how to tell if you're OD'ing on this healthy habit—and what to do instead.

By **AMY SCHLINGER**

**→ WE ALL KNOW THAT** regular exercise is essential. It can help you keep your weight in check, improve your mental health and reduce your risk of developing certain cancers. Research even shows that vigorous workouts could help you live longer. That said, it is possible to get too much of a good thing: It's called overtraining, and it can show up as everything from chronic soreness to mood disturbances. Tune in to these symptoms warning you that you're overdoing it, then learn how to tweak your habits for even greater sweat success.

## #1: You're killing yourself, but who can even tell?

Remember that Britney Spears lyric “Gimme, gimme more”? That's you in a nutshell. But “when you spend hours in the gym doing the same routine, your body becomes very efficient, and you stop seeing changes,” explains Michelle Lovitt, an exercise physiologist in Los Angeles. Going long can also lead to overuse injuries and mental boredom, adds Frank Baptiste, founder of FranklyFitness in New York City, who switches up his clients' plans monthly. “Most people think of just changing exercises,” he says, “but you can also manipulate volume—time, number of sets or reps—and intensity—load, speed, and tempo.” Maybe swap out

a few of those long cardio parties for a session at the weight rack, suggests Lovitt. Hit opposing muscle groups (e.g., biceps and triceps), alternating all-out effort with short rest periods. The payoffs: decreased gym time, higher calorie burn and a more toned physique.

## #2: You've got an elevated heart rate outside of the gym

Don't be so quick to write off that thumping in your chest as the result of too much coffee. A faster-than-usual heart rate can have a number of causes, including pushing too hard. “Overexercising often contributes to pain, dehydration or electrolyte imbalances, all of which can lead to an increase in heart rate,”

says Kathryn Berlacher, MD, a cardiologist at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. If yours is higher than normal for an extended period (resting heart rates vary; the typical range is 60 to 100 beats per minute), you may need to dial things back. Giving yourself time to hydrate, replenish, recover and repair lowers the demands on the heart. Don't notice a decrease after adding more downtime? See a doctor to rule out other possible issues, such as an overactive thyroid, infection or heart disease.

### #3: You think pain is just the price to pay for a better body

Some achiness (aka delayed onset muscle soreness) is normal, but this symptom shouldn't be chronic. "If you're always sore, your body isn't repairing properly. Recovery only happens when your muscles and nervous system get the nutrients and rest they need to adapt to fitness," explains Joe Holder, a Nike trainer and a performance coach at S-10 Training in New York City. In other words: all pain,

no gain. Try reducing your high-intensity days to two or three a week, advises Holder, using the others as low-impact aerobic fitness and recovery days.

### #4: You're suddenly dragging

Exercise should boost you up, not bring you down. So if you're feeling lethargic, "you're burned-out," says Michele Olson, PhD, professor of kinesiology at Auburn University at Montgomery in Alabama. "You might even need a full week off so your body can rest and readjust." Fatigue can lead to irritability, depression, reduced appetite and sleep issues—all of which can compound your low-energy woes. When you return to fitness, ease in with a restorative workout, like yoga. "You'll be surprised how well your body and mind respond and how much your energy levels improve," says Olson.

### #5: You can't remember the last time you actually enjoyed your workout

Yes, you want to feel tired, sweaty and challenged, but you don't want to dread the gym. Adam Rosante, a strength and nutrition coach and the author of *Strong Body Guide*, advises adding playtime (think recess!) to active recovery days, which helps your body heal as well as keeps fitness fun. "I play tag with my clients," he says. "It's really a series of interval sprints, but when you think of it less as a chore and more as play, it's a total game changer." ■

## MAKE THE MOST OUT OF YOUR REST DAYS

Help your body recover with these self-care strategies from pros.

### DO

#### ► Eat well and hydrate

"You should be feeding your body nutrient-dense foods, like lean proteins and veggies," says Adam Rosante, a strength and nutrition coach. "And be sure to drink plenty of water."

#### ► Use a foam roller

"Imagine knots on a rubber band—trigger points are like that, and exercising can inflame them," notes Rosante. "Rolling out breaks them up so you can move better."

#### ► Walk around

"Long walks help increase blood flow to the muscles," explains Rosante, "bringing oxygen to fix damaged tissue."

### DON'T

#### ► Binge on junk food

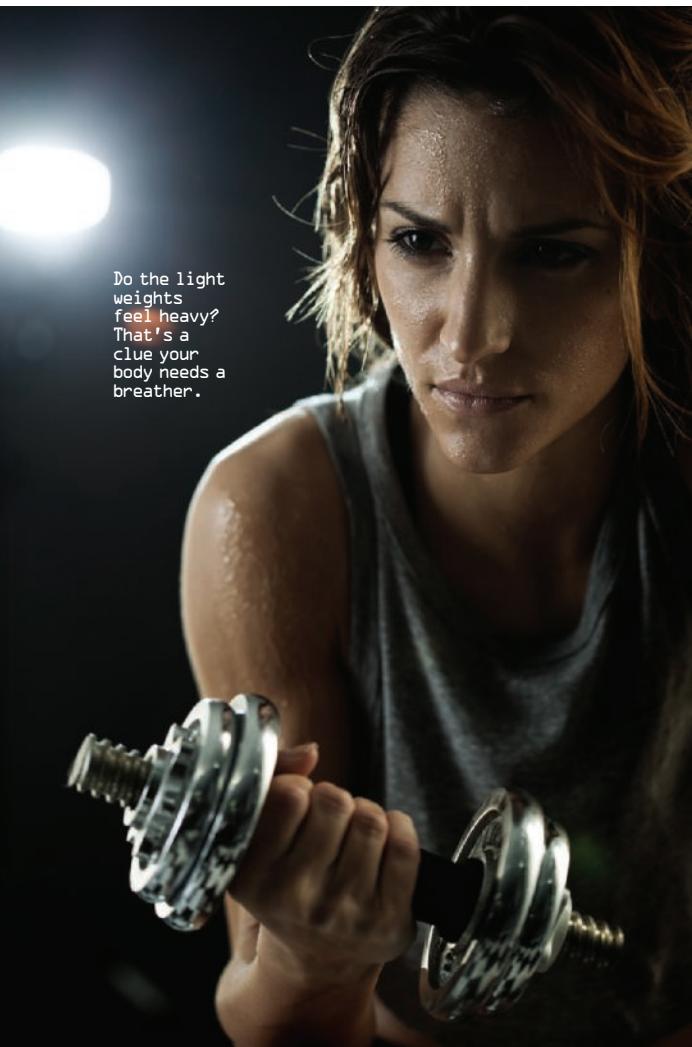
"A rest day is not a cheat day," notes Joe Holder, a Nike running coach and trainer.

#### ► Stay up all night

"Sleep is key for your body to recover, repair muscles and reset the brain," says Holder. "Not getting enough can increase food cravings and push your body into chronic stress mode, making it harder to meet your goals."

#### ► Train—duh!

Sounds simple, but it can be challenging. Proper rest optimizes the body for future workouts. And don't worry: "No gains will be lost in one or even two days," adds Jon-Erik Kawamoto, founder of JK Conditioning in Newfoundland, Canada. To put it another way: Namaste...in bed.



Do the light weights feel heavy? That's a clue your body needs a breather.