

FIT FACTS FOR BUSY BODIES

“Cross-Training” For Fitness Progression

By Trish Schwartz

QUESTION:

I heard that doing the same exercise routine over and over does not do you any good after awhile. Is this true?

ANSWER:

Any exercise routine will improve your fitness level to the point at which your body adapts to that level of intensity and frequency of exercise. Its not that the routine does not do you any good any more, but that it will only maintain the fitness level you have achieved with that routine. Increased fitness, both in cardiorespiratory endurance and muscular strength and endurance, will not change unless you change something.

So, if you have peaked out with your results, whether it be weight loss or muscle tone, you need to change your fitness routine to include a variety of different types of exercises and routines (Cross Training) as well as change the total time and intensity level of the routine. Create a fitness routine to include several forms of cardiorespiratory workouts. For example, instead of just walking on the treadmill at the same pace and incline, create an interval workout on the treadmill by changing the incline every minute, starting at 0% incline and working your way up to a 10% incline and then back down. Your leg muscles will experience a wide variety of muscular work because of the change in incline. In addition, your heart rate will vary in intensity to create a very good calorie-burning workout. Better yet, change from the treadmill, once in awhile, to something else, like a stair machine, a stationary bike or perhaps a “spinning” class (aerobic exercise class on a bike) or regular aerobics class.

As far as your weight lifting routine is concerned, change it as well. If you are a beginner, start out with a very controlled and simple, total-body routine and work at it for about a month, all the while increasing your resistance. Then start changing your exercises. Changing your routine every 6 - 8 weeks is one strategy. Another strategy is to learn three different, total-body, three-day-per-week routines and alternate them each time you work out.

Don't just depend on your fitness center to provide all your fitness needs. To compensate for the lack of time or ability to get to the gym, you should have a backup fitness plan for home or outdoors. “Variety is the spice of life” is true in fitness. To stay active, being active at the gym, at home and other recreational environments is the key. If you do not know what to do, hire a personal trainer to get you started.