

Overreaching/Overtraining: More Is Not Always Better

Are you struggling with your exercise/conditioning routine or feeling a bit washed out, stale, and drained? Perhaps your muscles are persistently feeling heavy, stiff; a bit sore, and your exercise program has ceased to be enjoyable. If so, you may be suffering from a condition referred to as "overreaching" or, in more severe cases, "overtraining syndrome."

Overreaching is broken into functional and nonfunctional states, both of which respond to extra rest. Nonfunctional overreaching leads to a more extended period of decreased performance than functional overreaching and is accompanied by neuroendocrine and/or psychological symptoms. Overtraining is considered severe nonfunctional overreaching that results in a prolonged performance decrement (>2 months) and more severe symptoms.

Effective conditioning requires a balance between intense training sessions and periods of rest/recovery. Too much overload and/or not enough recovery can result in both physiological and psychological symptoms that limit performance and may cause one to cease participation in a previously enjoyable activity. In many noncompetitive exercisers, the condition is often the result of inadequate rest/recovery because of busy work lives, family, work and health stressors, meal skipping, and poor sleep. Exercise can become addictive because of the effects of endorphins, dopamine, and other exercise-generated factors on the brain. This addiction can easily result in frequent intense training sessions that are not interspersed with adequate recovery periods. This phenomenon, especially when combined with the increasing popularity of intense multi-event endurance competitions and intense group training programs, places individuals at increased risk for developing a nonfunctional state and, in more severe cases, overtraining syndrome.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

More than 125 signs and symptoms have been identified in published literature, making a definitive diagnosis challenging. The most common symptoms include:

- Persistent heavy, stiff, and sore muscles
- Persistent fatigue, washed-out feeling
- Decreased performance and ability to maintain the training regimen
- Increased susceptibility to infections, colds, headaches
- Nagging and somewhat chronic injuries
- Sleep disturbances
- Decreased mental concentration and restlessness
- Increased irritability
- Depression
- Tachycardia and, in some cases, bradycardia
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Bowel movement changes
- Absence of menstruation

TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

The primary treatment is rest and, with more severe cases, an extended break from training. Improved quality of sleep, appropriate nutrition and hydration, and addressing non-exercise stressors are essential for full recovery. In some cases, your physician may choose to rule out other potential organic causes related to a variety of illnesses and health conditions.

Prevention of nonfunctional overreaching and overtraining is critical to continued enjoyment of and benefit from your exercise training program. Following are a few key tips:

- Listen to your body and take extra recovery time as indicated.
- Follow the 10% rule; don't increase training volume and/or intensity by more than 10% at a time.
- Follow a periodization format; intersperse periods of intense/ high-volume training with extended periods of rest/recovery and/or cross-training.
- Recovery/rest between intense workouts is critical because this is when muscle tissue repair and growth occur; usually 24 to 72 hours depending on the intensity and volume of the session.
- You shouldn't feel wiped out following a hard workout; you should feel like you could do more; if not, you are doing too much.
- Proper nutrition and hydration are important; consulting a sports dietician may be helpful.
- Quality sleep is essential.
- Variety in your training is healthy; don't do the same thing all the time.

Maintaining a training log can be helpful in identifying periods of overreaching and the need for extra recovery. Include variables such as your resting heart rate, sleep, weight (for weight loss), mood, workout intensity/duration, and how muscles and joints respond. With appropriate recovery and using a periodization plan for your long-term training, you will be able to minimize the risk of overtraining and keep your exercise and competitions fun and enjoyable.

Please review our business at: [Yelp](#) [City Search](#) [Google +](#) [Angie's List](#)

We are proud winners of the 2016-2017 THE SPECTRUM AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE. View our Spectrum Award [here](#).

Trainerly allows you to workout and exercise at your home, office, hotel room or pretty much anywhere in the world through live 2-way webcam. [Sign-up](#) for a class with me today. Use the promotional code "trainerly20" to save 20% off any service.

[Click Here](#) to sign-up for our e-mail list so can receive all of our articles & download your free copy of our Dietary Information e-book.

View our books on Amazon by [Clicking Here](#).

[Like us on Facebook/Connect with us on LinkedIn/Follow us on Twitter](#)
[Follow us on Google+/Pinterest/Instagram/YouTube](#)

(Hold down the Ctrl key & click the underlined words or logos)
Make sure to forward to friends and followers.