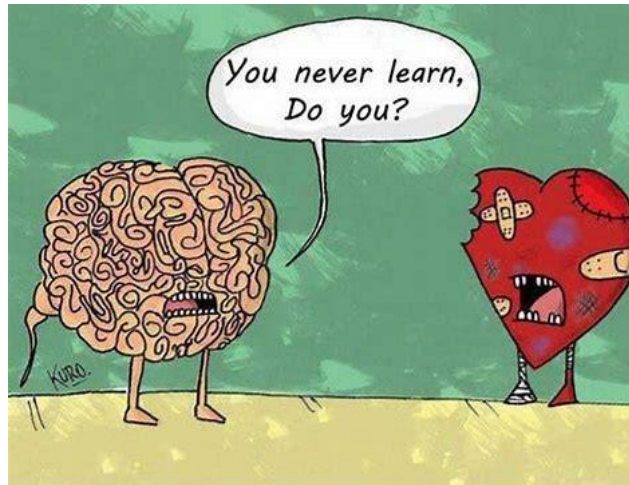


TTIPS VOL. 39/22 – INSIGHTS
- Warning Signs of Excessive Exercise -



Introduction

Hello riders. This week's article is a follow on from last week's feature on the impact of heavy exercise on heart health. How do you know if you might be overdoing it? Read on.

I realize that this article is not cycling specific, but there are elements that are relevant to our sport. Enjoy

Warning Signs That You're Pushing Yourself Too Hard in the Gym

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By K. Aleisha Fetters

"No pain, no gain" has its limits — and that "hurts so good" post-workout soreness isn't always as beneficial as you might think. Often, the very things that you'd think would signal awesome fitness progress are actually warning signs to slow the heck down, explains Minnesota-based exercise physiologist Mike T. Nelson, Ph.D., C.S.C.S.

It's important to listen to your body and what it's really saying. Don't listen, and your exercise could wind up working against you, actually triggering muscle loss and fat gain. Plus, pushing too hard comes with a huge risk of injury — and all of your training won't do you much good if you're sidelined on race day.

So how do you push past your comfort zone without pushing your fitness off a cliff? Keep your eyes peeled for these four warning signs.

YOU DREAD YOUR WORKOUTS

"Your fitness routine should be one of the most fun things you do all day long. So if you're not smiling, it's important to think about why," says sports medicine physician Jordan Metz, M.D. After all, just not feeling your workouts is one of the first symptoms of overdoing it, often appearing before any of the other warning signs on this list.

Sure, everyone has days when getting to the gym is a struggle — but once you crank up the tunes and start sweating, you should perk up. "If you still feel like crap halfway through your workout, leave," says Nelson. Go home, take a look at your training log, and brainstorm some ways to switch things up. Maybe it's time to try out a new workout routine or fitness class. Also, if your workout routine doesn't include at least one to two full rest days per week, add those in, he says. You can, however, minimize the number of full rest days you need by breaking up your high-intensity or endurance workouts with some light, gentle workouts such as yoga or swimming.

YOU'RE SUPER SORE AFTER WORKOUTS

"A lot of people think they need to be really sore the day after their workouts — but soreness isn't a super good indicator of progress," explains Nelson. That's because you should only feel intense delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) about 24 to 48 hours after completing a workout that's brand spanking new. After performing the same workout two, three, or four times...not so much.

So, if you're weeks or months into a consistent workout routine and still find yourself limping around the house on a regular basis, something's likely wrong with your workouts, notes Nelson. It's also important to notice when, exactly, you feel sore. Is it during that 24- to 48-hour window? If it starts up less than a day after your workout, or if it lingers for more than two days, you are experiencing more than DOMS. You could have an overuse injury and need to give the muscle a rest. Fight the urge to static stretch — which could exacerbate any microtears in the muscle — and instead opt for foam rolling. Once the pain has completely subsided, ease back into your workout routine, reducing intensity or frequency this time around.

YOUR JOINTS HURT

While overuse injuries can and do affect muscles, they most often strike in and around the joints. "If you ever feel pain in your joints, stop what you are doing immediately," says Metzl. "You should never feel pain in your joints while exercising," he notes.

Take a few days off of your workouts — or at least any exercise moves that affect the iffy joint — and prioritize RICE (rest, ice, compression, and elevation). Once your joint is pain-free and you feel ready to head back into the gym, focus on quality over quantity. Many exercisers get caught up in a "go hard or go home" mentality and end up sacrificing form and technique in favor of intensity, notes Nelson. However, if you perform every exercise with proper form (even if that means going down in weights or reps), you'll get more out of each exercise session while also keeping the injury from recurring.

YOUR WORKOUT PERFORMANCES (AND RESULTS) ARE LACKING

If you're in week five of your workout routine and you can't run as fast or lift as much as you could two weeks ago, it's important to realize that you're not backsliding because you aren't working hard enough. Rather, you're backsliding because you're working too hard, says Nelson. Remember, exercise stresses your body, and unless you also give it sufficient time to recover, your workouts merely serve to break you down. That's why, if you find your workout performance heading downhill, you will probably also notice your muscle gain and fat loss plateauing, or even reversing.

The simplest fix is to cut your training volume by half or more, he says. So, for instance, if you generally perform four sets of 10 reps of a given exercise, switch to two sets of 10 reps using the same weight. If you take a cycling class six times per week, cut that down to three. And if you usually run 5 miles four days per week, complete your runs at half pace, cut them to 2.5 miles each, or eliminate two running days per week. You don't have to completely ditch your workouts to get back on the right side of fitness progress.

Okay riders, hope you enjoyed that. Until next time,

Make Every Ride Epic,

Darryl