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Top 5 Exercise Plateau Breakers

By Gillian Hood-Gabrielson

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Plateau. That dreaded word that you do not want to hear, let alone experience. Especially if you have been diligently exercising in an attempt to get fit or lose weight. We have all experienced a plateau at some time all of a sudden you stop losing weight or you just cant seem to run any faster. When you hit a plateau, dont panic. It doesnt necessarily mean you need to work harder or spend more days at the gym.

Here are five ideas that may help you break through in record time.

Take an Active Rest

If you have hit a plateau, it may be time for an active rest. Take a week off from structured exercise, and instead take leisurely walks, play ball with the kids, or take a yoga class. Active rest rejuvenates the mind and the body and allows for overworked muscles to rest and rebuild. You will return to exercise stronger and ready for new challenges.

Time to Eat

As you increase your fitness level, your bodys metabolism may increase and so will your calorie needs. If you hit a plateau, evaluate how much you are eating. You may need to eat more than you have in the past for your body to continue to increase its fitness level. If you find you are often hungry, this is a clear sign you need to eat more to sustain your exercise program.

Mix it Up

If you do not vary your workout routine your body will eventually run on cruise control, and you will experience a plateau. Try new cardiovascular activities, or use free weights if you always use machines for strength training. Changes in your routine will surprise the body and force it to adapt,

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bringing you to new levels of fitness.

Different Day, Different Intensity

Varying your activities, or cross-training is important to avoid or break through a plateau. While cross-training the type of activity is often recommended, it is also important to cross-train the intensity of your workouts. Specify different days of the week as low, moderate or high-intensity days. Try interval training work at a low intensity for a couple of minutes and increase to a high intensity for a couple of minutes, and repeat. If you use a heart rate monitor, be sure your average heart rate for your exercise sessions vary from day to day.

Sleep It Off

Be sure you are getting enough sleep. Getting the right amount of sleep for your body will allow time

for your muscles to recover from exercise. This will ensure that you can come to your next exercise session with enough energy and at full strength to take on a challenging workout.

If you are still frustrated, find inspiration in the story of Chris Witty, winner of the Gold Medal in 1000 meter speed skating in the 1998 Winter Olympics. A month before she was to compete in the Olympics, she was diagnosed with mononucleosis. Of course she had to cut back on training, and at the time that she should have been preparing to peak for competition. Not only did she win the Gold Medal, which nobody expected, she broke the world record! Imagine what a little rest might do for your workouts!

If you find you still cant break through that plateau, then make the decision to ride it out. Sometimes a plateau is necessary to allow the body to catch up with a new body weight or fitness level. Rest assured your body knows what is best and will break through the plateau at the right time!

Gillian Hood-Gabrielson, MS, ACSM is the president of Flexible Fitness, a nationwide coaching practice offering health and fitness solutions for your busy lifestyle including Fitness Coaching by Phone, Intuitive Eating, and monthly motivational seminars. She can be reached at 866-618-8814 or by email at

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How to Break Out of a Weight Loss Plateau

By Renee Kennedy

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What is a weight loss plateau?

You are on a diet, but you reach a period of time (two or more weeks) where you can't seem to lose any weight. Your weight may actually fluctuate 3lbs up or down, but you can't seem to break below this range.

You can experience a weight loss plateau for different reasons:

1. You are consuming too many calories for the amount of calories that you are burning off.
2. You are not consuming enough calories; your body defends itself by slowing down your metabolism.

First, you need to determine if you are experiencing a plateau or if your weight is in a state of normal fluctuation. Weigh yourself once per week. If you have not lost any weight after 3 weeks, you've hit a plateau. Remember, people lose weight at different rates. If you've lost even one pound after three weeks, you are still losing weight and probably don't need to change anything. The closer you get to your goal weight, the harder it will be to lose weight.

Second, if you are experiencing a plateau, look at your current diet and exercise patterns. The NutriCounter can function as a measurement tool to see how many calories you are consuming each day. (<http://www.nutricounter.com>) It will also help you determine if you are eating the appropriate amount of carbohydrates and protein each day. You should also keep an exercise journal that will help you determine how much exercise you are getting each day.

Here are some patterns that you may need to break.
(Note: before trying any of the methods below, get your doctor's advice. This is especially important if you have special dieting needs.)

1. You should be eating at least 1200 calories a day if you

are a woman and 1500 calories per day if you are a man. If

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you restrict your calories too much your body will start stockpiling fat because it thinks you are starving.

2. You may try to break a plateau by decreasing the percentage of carbohydrates and increasing the percentage of protein that you intake each day.

3. Another common recommendation is not to mix your protein and carbohydrates. If you have a protein breakfast, wait 2–3 hours before resuming your balanced meals.

4. Generally speaking, you should be exercising no more than 1 hour per day. However, ask yourself if your fitness routine is intense enough? Simply walking around the block for 15 minutes a day may not be enough for you. Each person is different. Also, walking around the block may have been an excellent exercise when you first started to lose weight, but it may not be enough now that you've hit a plateau.

5. If you have recently added a fitness regimen to help you lose weight, you may experience a slight weight gain for the first few weeks, especially if part of that routine involves weight lifting. This can be a very frustrating experience. If you are engaged in an intense workout regimen, it may help to measure yourself with a measuring tape, rather than the scale. You will be putting on muscle and muscle will burn more calories than fat, but it's also heavier.

6. If you are already on a low calorie diet and you are sticking to it, then it is not recommended that you cut out any more calories. Increasing your activity is really the key to breaking out of a plateau. However, if you are "supposed" to be on a low calorie diet but you are not sticking to it, well, the answer is obvious: you need to stick to it.

Come and visit the NutriCounter web site for more information on how nutrition and fitness influence weight loss, diabetes, pregnancy, heart disease and more!
<http://www.nutricounter.com>

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