

Fitness Center News

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About The Author



Holly Little

A former Division I basketball player, Holly is a certified in Spinning and personal training.



Hit a Plateau? Jump Start Your Workout Program

Shocking the Body

-- By Holly Little, Certified Personal Trainer

Tuesday: Go to the gym, run on the treadmill for 30 minutes, go home. Thursday: Go to the gym, run on the treadmill for 30 minutes, go home. Saturday: Go to the gym... well, you get the point. Hitting a rut in your workout routine is a common pitfall that can halt your fitness momentum and even tempt you to stop exercising.

Figuring out if you've hit the wall is simple. Ask yourself two questions. "Am I not seeing the same results as when I started my workout routine? Am I losing my motivation to go to the gym?" If 'Yes' is the answer to either question, it's time to shock your body with a new or different routine. As the saying goes, "variety is the spice of life," and workouts are no exception.

Drastic changes are not necessary; in fact they're discouraged. We're talking about small changes that confuse your body a bit and return it to "fat-burning" and "muscle-building" mode. When your routine remains utterly monotonous, your body thinks it's in maintenance mode, making body shape change hard to obtain. That's why an element of shock is needed.

How do I do it?

It all depends on your current routine. Here are some suggestions:

Runners:

- Decrease/increase length of time
- Decrease/increase intensity
- (Outside) Change your route, even if it's the same distance
- Add some hills

Strength workouts:

- Shift the focus of your workout each time. (Upper body one day, lower body the next, core the next)
- Add some cardio
- Shorten your total workout time and go at a quicker pace. (Or lower your pace and add more exercises)
- Simply do different exercises, even if it hits the same muscles

Other ideas:

- If you take classes (yoga, Pilates, etc.) try adding a day of swimming or spinning
- Cardio: Do sprints one day, endurance the next
- Whatever your workout, do it with a buddy/group; or if you take classes, do a solo workout

These may not seem drastic enough to produce noticeable results, but your body responds to even the slightest bit of change if it's used to the same routine, day after day. If you feel sore or achy the next day, consider it a sign that your body is responding positively. Remember, every once in awhile, the body needs a little shock.

Healthy Ingredients = Fewer Calories in Kids

by Diane Lofshult

Food for Thought:

Who says organic food isn't worth the extra cost? A new study suggests that buying healthier but costlier ingredients may be the better deal in the long run. Replacing less healthy ingredients with more wholesome substitutes is not only more nutritious; it also reduces your kids' daily caloric intake, according to a study presented last October at the annual meeting of the Obesity Society.

Researchers funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation served breakfast, lunch and afternoon snacks to 26 children (ages 3–5) twice a week for 2 consecutive weeks. During the second week, however, the researchers prepared the snacks using lower-fat ingredients and more fruits and vegetables. Without changing the menu at all, they substituted healthy ingredients—for example, using 1% milk instead of whole milk and “hiding” veggie purées in pasta sauce.

During the second week, the children consumed about 400 fewer calories each day and—perhaps more important—did not

compensate by eating more later in the day or the following day. According to a press release on the foundation's website, "the findings indicate that healthy substitutions can significantly reduce caloric intake." The researchers also noted that the children appeared to enjoy the healthier meals as much as the ones served the first week.

Foam Rollers



By Elizabeth Quinn, About.com Guide

Updated March 03, 2011

Foam rollers offer many of the same benefits as a sports massage, without the big price tag.

The foam roller not only stretches muscles and tendons but it also breaks down soft tissue adhesions and scar tissue. By using your own body weight and a cylindrical foam roller you can perform a self-massage or myofascial release, break up trigger points, and soothe tight fascia while increasing blood flow and circulation to the soft tissues.

How It Works

The superficial fascia is a soft connective tissue located just below the skin. It wraps and connects the muscles, bones, nerves and blood vessels of the body. Together, muscle and fascia make up what is called the myofascia system. For various reasons including disuse, not enough stretching, or injuries, the fascia and the underlying muscle tissue can become stuck together. This is called an adhesion and it results in restricted muscle movement. It also causes pain, soreness and reduced flexibility or range of motion.

Myofascial release is a body work technique in which a practitioner uses gentle, sustained pressure on the soft tissues while applying traction to the fascia. This technique results in softening and lengthening (release) of the fascia and breaking down scar tissue or adhesions between skin, muscles and bones.

Myofascial release has also been shown to relieve various muscle and joint pains such as IT band syndrome and shin splints as well as improving flexibility and range of motion.

Foam rollers are inexpensive and with a bit of experimentation you can target just about any muscle group.

Ask The Ripped Dude: Can I Target Tone Or Spot Strengthen?

With over 20 magazine covers and 9 expert columns, Obi's here to help. His nickname says it all: 'The World's Most Ripped Fitness Model.'

by [Obi Obadike](#) Oct 18, 2011

Yo Obi, I'd love to know how to target areas for strength and toning. I've lost 180 pounds and need to tone my stomach and strengthen my core. Sit-ups aren't doing as much as I'd hoped and I don't want surgery!

Obi: I hate to break the news, but there's no such thing as spot reduction to torch belly fat or reveal great abs. Flat stomachs and washboard bellies are prepared in the kitchen.

Eating nutrient-rich, healthy foods allows you to lean down and lose enough overall body fat for the look you crave. Forget spot-toning: a lean belly is built with a lean body!

Performing 100 sit ups per day won't do much to remove your belly fat, but if you perform them over time, ab exercises strengthen your core and develop muscle underneath the fat. A lot of people actually believe that, if they use some unique ab-carving product they spot on an infomercial, they'll have abs like the spunky fitness model on TV.

The Hard Truth

The infomercials don't do a good job painting the real picture of incredible abs.

They never talk about the vast importance of diet.

Nutrition is 80 percent of the battle to remove belly fat. You can crunch 'til the cows come home, but if you surpass your proper daily caloric intake, then you will never achieve the taut tone you've always wanted.

Typically, for a man to have his abs pop from the shame of his spare tire, his body-fat percentage must fall at or below 10 percent. For a woman's abs to appear, like the forest through the fog, she must reach 12 percent body fat or less. Some women's abs could appear at 14 percent or less, depending on the thickness of their abdominal muscle bellies.

