

## When is Enough, Enough? *By Joy Karley, M.A.*

**Chances are you're familiar with the satisfaction a terrific workout brings; a workout that leaves you feeling invigorated, refreshed, and stress-free...that "good all over" feeling!**

Unlike drugs, artificial stimulants, and sweets, exercise is something that can not only make you feel wonderful but is also good for you! In fact, the US Surgeon General released a report in July of 1996 encouraging participation in moderate physical activity to improve and/or prevent an overwhelming number of health concerns facing a large percentage of our population.

Exercise can help combat obesity, lower blood pressure, improve self-esteem, battle depression, decrease stress, reduce the risk of heart disease, boost your metabolism, increase muscle tissue, and a whole lot more. Simply put, a steady dose of exercise can improve your health and the quality of your life... that is, as long as you don't overdo it. That's right – when it comes to exercise, it is possible to get too much of a good thing. Exercise can be powerful medicine, but like medicine, you have to be careful not to overdose.

### SIGNS ASSOCIATED WITH OVERTRAINING

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- Decreased appetite
- Increased resting heart rate
- Difficulty falling asleep
- Feeling sluggish and tired
- Workouts that once seemed easy become difficult to complete
- Hormone imbalances – irregular or cessation of menstrual cycle
- Negative mood swings
- Depression and tension
- Colds/flu that linger or recur frequently

Anyone from weekend exercisers to elite athletes are at risk of overtraining if they are not sensible in their approach to exercise. Even if you are just starting out on a low-intensity walking program, it is still important to gradually build up your exercise intensity, duration, and frequency. Once you've reached your goal, don't try to push too far past it. If you feel you need more exercise to reach your health and fitness goals, consider cross-training to challenge your body in new ways while preventing overuse injuries.

Knowing when "enough is enough" is fairly easy to determine. Many of the signs of overtraining are pretty obvious, but some are a bit subtler. The hardest part is listening to your body and responding to the warning signs of doing too much. Here is what to watch for...

### Don't forget rest

During periods of rest between exercise sessions, the body adapts to the physical stress of exercise by becoming stronger and replenishing its energy stores. If rest is not incorporated into your exercise schedule, the body does not get the chance to recover properly and may begin to break down in various ways.

How much rest you need between exercise sessions depends on the nature of your exercise schedule as well as your fitness level. At least 24 hours is recommended; however, some bodies may require more. Tendinitis, stress fractures, and "shin splints" are just a few overuse syndromes that may result from too much training and not enough rest. The effects of overtraining can sneak up on you gradually, or hit you suddenly, so be sure to avoid them by taking care of your body and giving it the rest it needs!

### TRY

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- Different forms of exercise such as cycling, swimming, strength training, or walking
- Other class formats like step, low-impact or circuit training
- Recreational activities like hiking, inline skating, skiing or swing dancing
- New equipment such as a recumbent bike, treadmill, stair climber or ski machine
- Sports like tennis, racquetball, basketball, or volleyball
- Mind-body activities like yoga or tai chi