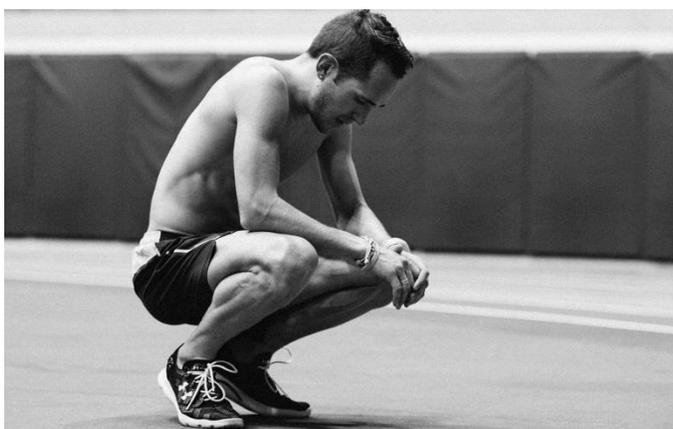


# 6 Warning Signs That You're Overtraining — and How to Ease Up

BY NICOLE PAJER FEBRUARY 2, 2017



Imagine you're preparing for a big race. You feel some pangs of pain in your lower back, but you keep pushing through. It's a scenario we've all probably experienced, with spin class after spin class, HIIT, running, more weights, maybe a yoga class, more running — all sandwiched into an already busy schedule with little time to rest. Yet, as the pain worsens, the deadline of the race looms and you just keep going. Chances are high that pain will become an injury. Best-case scenario: You listen to your body before you end up at the doctor's office — or worse.

Oftentimes, our bodies will tell us if we are pushing it too hard. But the signs of overdoing it are more than just sore muscles and physical tiredness. **According to Dr. Adam Splaver, a South Florida-based cardiologist, symptoms of overtraining can include everything from a lack of workout motivation to irritability, disrupted sleep, an inability to focus and a weight-loss plateau.**

Here are some signs that you may be overdoing your training sessions:

- 1. YOU'RE CRAVING SUGAR** - A strong desire for sweets may mean you are overdoing it with your workout routine, says Eric Harr, author of "Triathlon Training in Four Hours a Week: From Beginning to Finish Line in Just 6 Weeks." "When you crave sugary foods, your body may be in a state of glycogen depletion," he explains. "You may be exercising at too high an intensity level."
- 2. YOU AREN'T SEEING ANY NEW WEIGHT-LOSS RESULTS OR GAINS** - Overworking your body may actually result in you sabotaging your physical goals. "If you feel like you've plateaued, it may be because you're not giving your muscles a chance to recover," says Bree Branker, master instructor with IMAXShift.
- 3. YOUR MENTAL GAME IS OFF** - "If you begin to experience irritability, insomnia and cannot focus, it may be time to slow down," says Splaver. This means you could be pushing yourself too hard and throwing off your hormonal balance.

#### **4. YOU'RE EXPERIENCING SLEEP DISTURBANCES** - Trouble falling asleep at night?

Trouble staying awake during the day? You might be training too hard. "When you're overtrained, cortisol levels can be disrupted, resulting in sleep disturbances and reduced energy levels, both in and out of the gym," says Roland Denzel, author of "Eat Well, Move Well, Live Well: 52 Ways to Feel Better in a Week." "Naps can help, but until you return to at least 7–8 hours of quality sleep, consider reducing your long runs or heavy lifting days, at least for a while. Once your sleep is solid, you'll be surprised at how much better you train, too!"

**5. YOU LACK MOTIVATION** - One of the telltale signals that you're working out too much is that you suddenly feel an absence of motivation or the thought of exercising isn't exciting to you anymore. "That's a sign that you need to take a break," says Bill Koman, founder of Yoga Six. Harr adds that it's natural to not always be in the mood to work out, but if that becomes a consistent mentality, then your body may be trying to tell you something. "If you approach workouts with more anxiety and negativity than excitement and motivation, things need to change in your fitness program," he explains.

**6. YOU HAVE EXTREME MUSCLE SORENESS** - Feeling sore after trying a new workout for the first time or upping your weight capacity is completely normal. But if you're constantly experiencing aching muscles post workout, chances are you are taking your workouts too far. "Pay extra attention if you notice constant soreness or discomfort in one particular area of the body, as you may be working your way toward a repetitive-stress injury," says Rebecca Weible, founder of Yo Yoga! "These injuries are essentially wear and tear from doing the same movements over and over." She adds that this can happen especially if you're not using proper form, which is more likely when you're overtired.

#### **HOW TO BACK OFF**



If you find yourself overdoing it, it's best to take a few days off and reset. James Shapiro, a New York-based personal trainer and founder of Primal Power Fitness, suggests giving your overworked muscles a break and foam rolling any affected tight areas. "Self-myofascial release can help with any muscle imbalance you might have developed over your recent string of workouts. It improves range of motion and blood flow to affected areas." If you really want to be active, try stretching and gentle walks. "Other things like increasing your

hydration, eating a nutrient-rich diet, getting enough sleep and engaging in stress-reducing activities can help your body to recover," Shapiro adds. And when you hop back into your routine, it's important to switch things up to refrain from overburdening a particular area. "Change your routine one day a week," says Shapiro. "Focus on light cardio if all you focus on is weight training. Have an all-core workout for 30 minutes to engage those abs. Giving the muscle groups you train hard a break can actually make them stronger by working on supporting synergistic musculature."

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