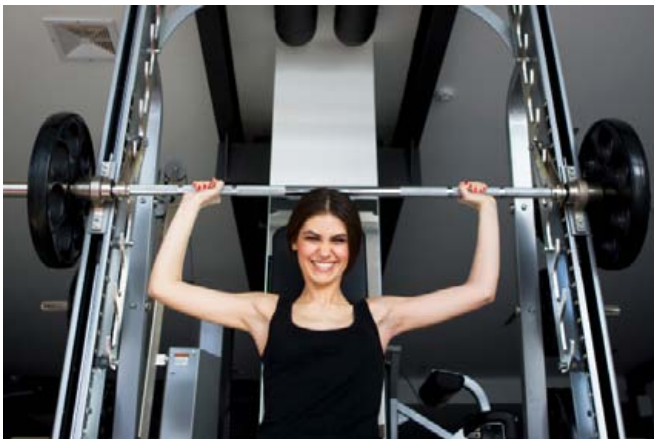


Five fitness rules you should break



Fitness rule #1: Cardio is king.

What you've been told: If you exercise to lose weight, cardio is the best way to go.

Why you should break it: Cardio is a great way to burn calories (especially if the workout is really intense). The only problem: Your body gets efficient at your workout, and you eventually start burning fewer calories than when you began. And if you spend all your time running and biking (while skipping your weight training workouts), the repetitive actions could cause stress and strain on your weakening muscles.

What you should try: Weightlifting. Research suggests it can burn as many calories as a high-intensity workout like spinning. On top of that, experts believe that building muscle can boost your metabolism. So mix up your cardio and weight workouts. You'll stay stimulated, and you'll burn more calories, faster. ([Tips to get more out of your cardio workouts](#))

Fitness rule #2: Don't stop between sets.

What you've been told: You shouldn't rest between weightlifting or cardio sets because it will decrease the amount of calories you burn.

Why you should break it: While you shouldn't wait too long between sets if you want to see results, it's important to give your muscles time to recover. It will also prevent injury, help you maintain good form and allow you to give it your all upon your next set.

What you should try: Instead of consistently rushing from one activity to another, try one set of exercises back to back that work the same muscle group or opposing muscle groups, then take a minute to recover. For example, to work the same muscle groups, try 10 pushups followed by 10 tricep dips; to work opposing muscle groups, try 10 back rows followed by 10 chest presses. And for a change, you can also try these [10 functional fitness moves](#) that work the whole body, taking a short break in between each one.

Fitness rule #3: Any workout is better than no workout.

What you've been told: As long as you're getting *some* physical activity, you'll stave off heart disease and dozens of other conditions like arthritis and cancer, and burn calories while you're at it.

Why you should break it: Any movement is better than none, but not all physical activities give you the level of exercise sufficient for optimal health

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benefits. Vacuuming does not give the same aerobic workout as running. And sweeping does not work the same muscle groups as riding a bike. ([See the new exercise guidelines.](#))

What you should try: Don't expect results by designing your "workouts" solely around housework. A better approach: Intersperse the days you do low-impact activities (like pulling weeds or tidying up the house) with days you try higher-intensity workouts (like running or power walking). By mixing up the types of activities (and including workouts that raise your heart rate), your risk of heart disease will decrease, and your fitness level will improve.

Fitness rule #4: Do crunches to get a six-pack.

What you've been told: If you do enough crunches, you'll achieve washboard abs.

Why you should break it: Unless you include cardio and other core training exercises in your workout routine, simply doing crunches won't do the trick. ([Get great abs in 15 minutes](#))

What you should try: If you want tight, toned abs, you need to work them from every angle (the sides, your lower abs and your midsection). You also need to burn the fat padding your torso. Your best bet is to take a class that focuses on core strength (like Pilates) and keep up -- and even change up -- your regular cardio workouts. And don't forget the importance of a healthy diet. If you are eating too much, you won't ever see those six-pack abs.

Fitness rule #5: Work out regardless of the weather.

What you've been told: It's safe for you to exercise outside in all weather conditions as long as you dress properly.

Why you should break it: Daily exercise is important, but certain outdoor conditions can hurt your health. Heavy smog days or cold, damp weather can increase your risk of having a heart or [asthma attack](#). Plus, if you suffer from allergies, high pollen days can make your workout a miserable experience. Worse, on days that are subzero or particularly hot, you run the risk of hypo- or hyperthermia and sunburn.

What you should try: On days when the weather looks iffy for exercise, stay inside and work out with weights, do an exercise video, or go to the gym. Not only will it give you the chance to change up your workout; you'll also be much more comfortable and will avoid putting your health at risk.

Workouts to try:

Fifteen top workouts of 2009
[Get pumped with BodyPump](#)
[The spin on spinning](#)