

Session 10 Plateau Busters

Everything works, but nothing works forever

Hitting a plateau is a common experience. It can be one of the most de-motivating things to happen. Plateaus are the number one reason why people abandon exercise. They bring on feelings of discouragement, confusion, and utter frustration. Thankfully, overcoming it is easy... all you need to do is prepare for it to happen and know the steps to take to overcome it.

What is a plateau?

The human body has a regulatory mechanism that works to keep the amount of energy you consume in balance with the amount of energy you use. In other words, the body does not like to lose weight! the slowing or halt of fat/weight loss **in spite of** exercise consistency and consistent, proper food intake.

Look at the experience of a plateau, as a *good thing!* Your body telling you “I am ready for the next stage”- “I have conquered this current routine” – “*Give me something new!!*” This is when fitness gets fun and you can add creativity to your routine.

The human body is amazingly adaptable for a variety of reasons. What you first need to do is identify the reason for the adaptation and make then proceed with the proper changes.

Plateaus: The Reasons & The Solutions

Lowering calories too far...

“It takes calories to burn calories,” which is true both internally and externally. Internally, the body simply slows its metabolic rate (burns fewer calories) when it senses a decrease in food intake. The body still functions correctly, but requires fewer calories, creating hunger and preventing fat loss. Externally, the body is tricked into doing less,(i.e., you get lazy, tired and therefore, move less and more economically).

What to do...

To prevent a plateau, keep your calories *slightly* below the amount recommended for maintenance to keep your metabolism and energy levels high during exercise and daily activities. A deficit greater than 500 to 700 calories makes it much more difficult to maintain lean muscle.

Loss of lean body mass

Lean body mass uses up to eight times the calories as fat does. Therefore, loss of enough of this fat burning commodity (muscle) dramatically lowers metabolism and brings fat loss to a screeching halt.

What to do...

Keep your body nourished with supportive foods and a quality multivitamin. Follow your exercise recommendations; resistance training at least 3 times a week, no more than 20-30 minutes of cardio.

Net weight loss

The less you weigh the fewer calories it takes to move your body, even during exercise.

What to do...

Concentrate on increasing lean muscle through resistance training. This is an ideal way to compensate for the fat loss of calories, due to net weight loss, and enhance your look.

Body becomes Efficient

The body is required to make hundreds of internal changes to adjust to different workloads. Each of these reactions consumes calories. Therefore, once the body stops repairing muscle from exercise or adding new cellular machinery, the calories burned to make these changes are no longer spent and the amount of energy your body uses decreases.

What to do...

Never let your body get used to exercise. Keep it guessing by changing frequency, intensity, type or time of exercise. When training for

Overtraining

More exercise is not always better. Just as in under-eating, overtraining may decrease the amount of calories you burn. This is partially due to adaptive thermogenesis, (a survival mechanism). In other words, there may be a point of diminishing returns, when an increase in exercise energy expenditure is negated by an equal decrease in non-exercise energy expenditure. This negates the additional work, at least until expenditure is dramatically increased and/or calories decreased.

What to do...

Take at least seven days off from your regular exercise routine (this should be done every 12 weeks, regardless). Start back with less and a different type of work and increase only as necessary (e.g., the least amount of specific work to initiate change). Your metabolism and daily activities will reset and increase again.

Enhanced physical condition

When you are in overall better shape, your system is more efficient - burns fewer calories to operate.

The primary benefit of exercise is to improve health through an appropriate regime. Improved health can cause a slower resting metabolic rate. In other words, fewer calories are burned during normal daily activities. This is partially due to an increase in cardiopulmonary efficiency (e.g., lower resting heart rate).

What to do...

Stick with your goal of staying healthy. Concentrate on exercise intensity and type changes for a longer “after-burn” (calories burned above the normal resting metabolic rate after exercise).

Just as a well-tuned car gets better fuel economy, a well-tuned body can also thrive on less fuel (calories) when consistently challenged. By making a few changes, you can jumpstart your routine and see positive results in no time.

Remember, the best ways to stave off a weight loss plateau involve boosting your metabolism, not decreasing your calories. Consider the following **Plateau Busters**:

- Reassess exercise time and intensity. If you've walked 30 minutes, three times a week for a few weeks, that's great! But it's time to add small bouts of extra intensity so 20 minutes now feels challenging. Do the extra rep or two, increase your range of motion, and increase resistance as you get stronger.
- Reassess exercise activities. Try new activities to cause muscles to be challenged and burn more calories.
- Consistency. Improvement and change occur when you do things often. Stopping and starting all the time will kill any momentum you need to succeed. You must find ways to stay in the game. Moderate forms of exercise, done consistently, provide far better results than the occasional full-body pummeling. A lifestyle that includes multiple forms of exercise five to six days a week guarantees results.
- Avoid the scale. Focus on inches lost and the leaner you are becoming. Your body fat percentage will decrease significantly *over time*.
- Make sure you are eating smaller, more frequent meals. Every time you eat the right amount and type of foods, you give your metabolism a small boost.
- Reassess the short-term goals that you made in Session Two to be sure you've selected the right strategies. Perhaps you need to re-evaluate the goals you made and come up with new solutions.
- Use your Fitness Journal to track and view how far you've come and how well you've done. This positive feedback will hold you accountable and help you stay motivated.

Complete....

- 1 What is a Plateau?
- 2 List two reasons why a Plateau occurs?
- 3 What can you do to avoid a plateau?