



# Signs of Over-training

By: Melissa Haug, Assistant Director of Fitness

Americans are being poked and prodded by the media more and more every day to get their buns moving, especially in recent years due to the "obesity epidemic" scare.

Although exercise has tremendous health benefits and positive body composition results, doing too much can be detrimental to your exercise gains and future health. In the case of train, more isn't necessarily better.

With a mission for better health and fitness, it is sometimes difficult to overcome one's enthusiasm and take a break from exercise, in other words rest the body. Enthusiastic exercisers will often forget that the "rest" days are necessary for the body to recuperate and grow, resulting in better exercise gains in strength and endurance.

If exercise is leaving you more exhausted than energized, you could be suffering from an acute case of over-training. Individuals who exercise excessively are risking more than poor performance; they're risking their health.

The following are signs described by the American Council on Exercise (ACE) that you need to pull on the reins and slow your exercise pace. Exercise is beneficial, but not when overdoing it. Listen to your body!

**Decreased performance.** Slower reaction times, reduced speeds and lowered endurance levels are all common signs of over-training.

**Agitation, moodiness, irritability or lack of concentration.** Too much exercise and too little rest can wreak havoc on the hormones and cause mood swings and an inability to concentrate.

**Excessive fatigue and malaise.** A body that never has a chance to fully recover from a previous workout will continue to feel more and more fatigued. Some people describe this feeling as "heavy legs."

**Increased perceived effort during normal workouts.** Over-training takes a toll on the body, and workouts that were once a breeze can begin to feel like a grind.

**Chronic or nagging muscle aches or joint pain.** Overused muscles and joints can cause constant aches, which may go unnoticed until the body is given proper rest.

**More frequent illnesses and upper-respiratory infections.** Too much exercise taxes all of the body's systems and makes it more difficult to ward off infections.

**Insomnia or restless sleep.** During sleep the body has time to rest and repair itself. An over-trained body, however, is sometimes unable to slow down and completely relax, making it difficult to recover between workouts.

**Loss of appetite.** Over-training can cause an increase in hormones such as epinephrine and norepinephrine that tend to inhibit appetite. The physical exhaustion and anxiety that often comes with over-training can also have the same effect.

**Chronically elevated heart rate at rest and during exercise.** A clear sign of an overworked heart muscle is a chronically elevated heart rate. Also, people who over-train will often find that it takes longer for their heart rate to return to normal after a workout.

**Menstrual cycle disturbances in women.** Exercising excessively and not consuming enough calories may disrupt a woman's menstrual cycle. While some may experience irregular periods, others will stop menstruating altogether.

Exercise is great and making gains can feel good, but gradual improvement is the only way to achieve your goals successfully and safely.