

## Plateau Busters

### Include Adequate Rest in Your Exercise Program

You changed your habits and lost weight steadily, but after awhile, that progress halted. You've been stuck at the same weight for days, weeks, or even months. There's nothing more frustrating than trying your best, feeling like you are doing everything right, yet not making any progress towards your weight loss or fitness goals.

Before you give up, realize that weight loss takes work, and time, and isn't always perfect. But, there are plenty of ways you can re-energize your program (and motivation) to bust through your weight loss plateau.

### What is a plateau?

If you've been exercising and cutting calories for several weeks, and you're no longer seeing the same results that you experienced in the beginning, then you've probably hit a plateau. This occurs when your progress comes to a standstill, but not necessarily moving backwards.

### Incorporate some or all of the following suggestions to both prevent and overcome a weight loss plateau:

- **Always allow 1-2 days of rest between working muscle groups.** During a strength training session, tiny tears occur in your muscle fibers that cause muscle soreness that lasts about 1-2 days after lifting weights. In order for those tiny tears to repair themselves and rebuild stronger muscles you **MUST** rest those muscles. If you don't rest long enough for repair to occur, you will actually get weaker, which is the opposite of everyone's goals, and a common plateau-causing culprit.
- **Try active recovery.** Research shows that engaging in lower intensity exercise after a strenuous workout session may be more beneficial than resting completely. There are two types of active recovery. The first is the typical cool down phase that you perform at the end of your workout. Properly cooling down has been shown to help your muscles recover faster, and reduce the levels of lactic acid in the muscles. The second type of active recovery involves exercising lightly in the days following a hard workout. So, rather than taking a day or two off from the gym, consider exercising at a lighter intensity level (go for an easy walk or take a stretching/yoga class).
- **Get plenty of sleep.** A significant amount of muscle repair occurs during your slumber. Inadequate amounts of shut-eye hinder your ability to recover from exercise, making plateaus more likely. While every individual's needs for sleep are different, most experts recommend getting **AT LEAST** 8 hours per night. Make sure this sleep is consistent during the week and through the weekends.

Source: SparkPeople.com

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