



At a Weight-Training Impasse

I bought two five-pound dumbbells and work out with them three times a week. At first it was difficult and I could barely do five to 10 reps of an exercise. After a few months, though, my workout has gotten much easier and I now can do 15 to 25 repetitions for the various exercises. My question—what next? I'm only using weights to have toned muscles and enough strength to help me with daily activities. I don't want to buy more weights if I don't have to. Should I do more sets and reps, or should I do my current routine quicker?

*Virginia Zambrana
Fairfax, VA*

Because your main focus is tone and only moderate strength, you'll want to stick with light to moderate weights and complete several repetitions. With the dumbbells that you have, work up to 24 repetitions on each exercise in your program.

Once you get to 25 repetitions, increase the number of sets you are doing. If you increase the number of sets to two, start with eight to ten repetitions and work up to 25 repetitions as you did before. If you then progress to three sets, you should keep the repetitions between 10-15, because there is little benefit from all those extra reps and you risk reduced quality and form. Increasing the pace of your workout isn't a good idea—do the exercises in a slow, controlled manner to work your muscles through a full range of motion.

*Renee DiMeo, M.S.
Akron, Ohio*

An obvious solution is to buy heavier weights, such as ten- or even 15-pound dumbbells. As your muscles become stronger they will not respond as readily to the five-pound weight; muscles need what is known as overload, in which you stress them beyond a level to which they're accustomed, to continually increase strength.

If you don't want to buy more weights, decrease the rest between sets; a

possible rest interval between sets could be 30 seconds. Another option is to do what are known as super sets, in which you do one set of an exercise with no rest between exercises.

*Walt Evans, M.Ed.
Philadelphia, PA*

All training is specific. With weight training in particular, it's important to first choose your goals, then structure your training to meet those goals. If you are using weights for better tone and some strength, I suggest doing your current routine two to three times a week and incorporating calisthenics, such as push-ups, into your workout for a more well-rounded program.

*Alfred Morris, Ph.D.
Washington, DC*

The Bunion Derby

In the past two months I have begun to develop bunions on both feet. This is after 17 years of running during which I have been free of complications, so I find this quite frustrating.

What causes bunions? What can I do to stop them from developing further?

*Peggy McCoy
Long Island, NY*

A bunion is an enlargement of the inner part of the bone of the great toe, usually accompanied by painful swelling. They are neither self-inflicted nor are they caused by shoes. Of course, shoes, especially tight ones, can aggravate bunions, but they are not the cause. The tendency to develop bunions is often inherited, although not everyone in a family will develop them and the predisposition may even skip a generation.

Bunions are caused by a complex series of biomechanical events which occur with every step. If you are of the type to develop bunions, the muscles and tendons around the great toe joint create an imbalance and slowly pull the great toe away from the lesser ones. At the same time, the metatarsal bone (the bone behind

the great toe) becomes unstable and gradually shifts from the straight position it should have to an outward curve. Excessive pronation often starts the series of events which lead to bunions.

A bunion will continue to enlarge over time, but it usually grows so slowly that the differences are imperceptible in the short term. As the angle between the first and second metatarsal increases, so does the size of the bunion.

It can be very difficult to stop a bunion from growing; there is not a lot of conservative therapy available to treat them. Orthotics can help stabilize the area and limit further development, and they are especially helpful if worn from an early age. Different types of pads and wider shoes may help with the symptoms, although they do nothing to address the root cause.

I recommend seeing a podiatrist, preferably one who is board certified by the American Board of Podiatric Surgery. Bunion surgery is often recommended, and although this will make you miss some running, you'll eventually be able to resume your regular training without the discomfort you now suffer. I have corrected many bunion deformities on runners and all have returned to pain-free, happy running.

*Douglas Tumen, D.P.M.
Kingston, NY*

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