

How Recovery Days Help Your Cardio Workout

 Facebook

 Twitter

 Pinterest

 Email

 More 65



Hitting the gym for a cardio workout whenever you can offers tons of benefits from better heart health to lower stress levels. But is there such a thing as too much cardio?

There might be if you don't put some recovery days into the mix. Even if you do cardio at a moderate pace, your body still needs time to rest and repair. Here are five reasons that recovery can help keep you on track.

1. Helps build your muscles.

If you do strength training, it's likely that you already know about the benefits of rest days. When you lift weights, you're basically making micro tears in the muscle, and recovery time causes that muscle to rebuild itself and get stronger. The same happens with cardio workouts since you're bringing whole muscle groups to a fatigue point. Recovery can help you come back stronger than before.

2. Sends you into deeper sleep.

Overtraining can cause stress throughout the body and that includes the mind. You'll be a stew of adrenaline and cortisol, the brain chemicals that keep you wired, and thinking way too much when you're trying to sleep. A rest day can turn off that "high-alert" alarm and let you get your zzzs instead.

3. Improves workout performance.

Although some people might fret that recovery will "set them back" in terms of reaching their goals, the opposite is true. Unless you take a rest day that extends into a couple weeks, you'll be boosting your performance when you come back to your cardio workouts.

4. Prevents injuries.

When you're all go-go-go with cardio workouts, there's a risk of overtraining, no matter what type of cardio you're doing. By using the same motions over and over, you could be putting strain on your muscles and joints. If that results in weakness, then your once-safe cardio workout suddenly becomes a recipe for injury. Because recovery allows for healing and repair, you'll be all about injury prevention instead.

5. Boosts the immune system.

Much like the negative effect on sleep, the stress of overtraining can do a number on your immune system, too. Your body won't be able to stay in top shape and fight off all those germey invaders you're exposed to daily. That can lead to feeling run down, achy, and irritable — and eventually, you may even be more susceptible to colds and other viruses. Give your immune system better support with recovery days that let it excel at its job.

Recover Now, Crush It Later

When you take a recovery day, it doesn't mean that you have to go into couch potato mode. Many fitness experts recommend taking a low-impact, moderate-pace activity day. For example, it might be the perfect time to take a yoga class or go for a walk with your kids. You can stay active and still let your body recover from your cardio workout rounds.

5 Reasons You Should Be Doing Ab Workouts

 Facebook

 Twitter

 Pinterest

 Email

 More

39



When it comes to getting a good ab workout, there's more to life than endless crunches. There's also lots more to be gained by working your abdominals than just a perfectly sculpted six pack. Here are some of the top reasons you should be working your abs, and a quick tip on how to sneak more ab time into your at-home workouts.

1. You'll improve your balance

In yoga, the secret to mastering any balance pose is engaging your abdominal muscles while you're up on one leg or teetering on your hands. Ab workouts that make your core stronger create more stability overall. And you'll see that benefit outside the yoga studio, too. We balance all the time — for example, when you're climbing stairs — so stronger abs will work for you all day, not just during your workouts.

2. You'll beat the posture slump

With smartphones and tablets, there's a strong tendency to hunch forward. That can lead to poor posture and, eventually, risk of pain in your back, shoulders, and neck. Ab workouts will give you more support throughout the abdominals, which means you'll be creating better structure for your spine. Shoulders back, stand up straight! Finally, you'll have the posture your mother always wanted for you.

3. You'll do better at any sport or activity

Unless you're aiming to start an eye-rolling league (count us in), it's likely that whatever activity you do will involve a solid core. Whether you're golfing, swimming, running, even canoeing or hiking, your abs allow you to transfer more power to your limbs. So, you can jump higher, paddle harder, or step up stronger.

4. You'll do your job better

It doesn't matter if you're a CEO or an intern, a factory worker, or a flight attendant — every job uses core muscles in some way. Those in offices struggle with how much they sit, and those who are on the move all day struggle with standing too much. Everyone twists, lifts, and reaches in some capacity. Ab workouts can alleviate the strain that repetitive work-related motions can cause.

5. You'll live longer

It sounds like a late-night commercial for a miracle product, but strong abs may actually help you live longer. Researchers at Mayo Clinic have noted that those with larger waist circumference size tended to have a greater risk of premature death than those with smaller waists. This was true even in the face of other risk factors like smoking, being sedentary, and alcohol use. Could ab workouts now keep you around in the long term? It's worth a shot.

Tips for Your Home Workouts

There are plenty of ab workouts that can help get your core stronger. But if you're just starting out, here's a simple strategy that you can actually do anywhere: Draw in your abdominal muscles as if you're cinching a belt and you have to “suck in” your belly to do it. Hold for five breaths, relax for three breaths, and do it again. Repeat 10 times for a “set.” Try to work up to 10 sets per day.

The best part about this tactic is that it's a great time-filler and sneaky exercise. You could be waiting in line, brushing your teeth, cooking dinner, or watching TV and still doing an ab workout.