



The All-Gain, No Pain Workout

Feel-Good Fitness
for Baby Boomers

Photo credit: [Adria Richards](#)



PRIME of LIFE FITNESS
Feel-good fitness for the rest of your life.

The All-Gain No-Pain Workout

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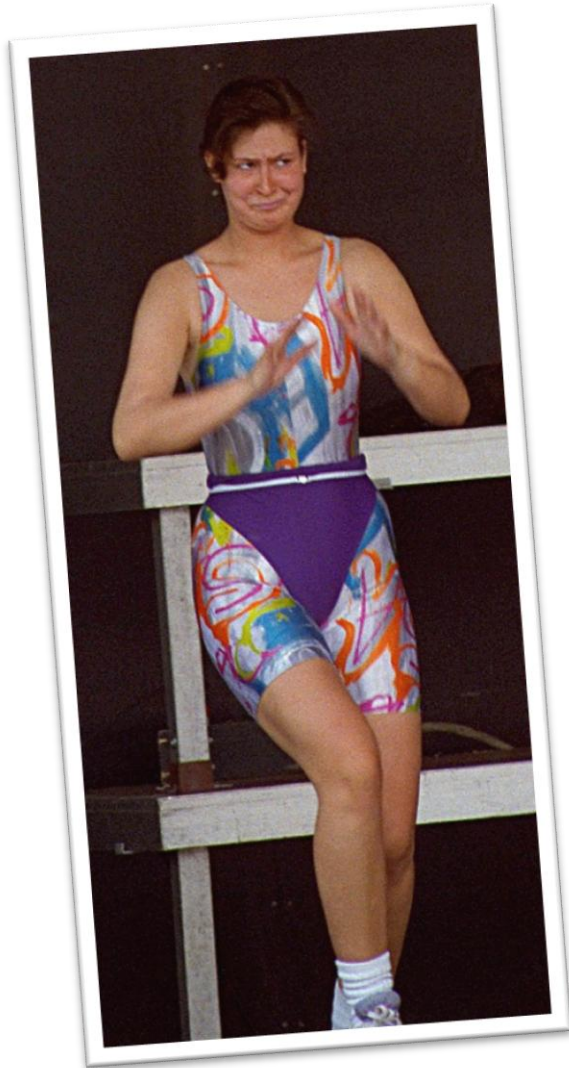
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Important disclaimer:

None of the information included in this article should be construed as medical advice. Prime of Life Fitness always recommends that you see your physician before you begin any exercise program.



No Pain, No Gain: The Worst Fitness Advice You Ever Got



If you're a Baby Boomer, you probably remember working out with Jane Fonda in the '80s, and you remember the catch-phrase she popularized: "No pain, no gain." I love Jane Fonda's contribution to fitness, especially the work she currently does to encourage people of all ages to keep moving. But "no pain, no gain" is some of the worst fitness advice I've ever heard!

We all have plenty of excuses for why we don't get enough exercise, but the one that bothers me most is "I don't like to exercise because it's uncomfortable—it doesn't feel good."

If your workout doesn't feel good, you're doing it wrong!

Unless you're a competitive athlete, your workouts should generally leave you feeling refreshed and energized, not worn out or in pain. Yes, your workout should be challenging, but pain is a sign that something's wrong, and it has no place in your workouts.

This eBook describes some common problems that may be causing you pain in your workouts and the easy solutions to help you enjoy your workouts more.

Photo credit: [myself](#)



Problem: You're using too much weight

Resistance training is essential for building strong muscles and revving up your fat-burning metabolism. But as with every other part of your workout, you need to build up your efforts gradually.

When you've reached the upper end of the repetition range and the exercise seems easy, it's time to increase your weight—but you should increase your weights in only 5-10% increments. So if you've been using 5 pound dumb bells for your biceps curls, you'll find it too challenging to increase to 10 pounds right away.

If you choose weights that are too heavy you'll be stiff and sore for the next day or two, and you'll likely be using improper muscle movements that can lead to imbalances and injuries. If you're using the right weights you should feel a little bit sore the following day or two, but the soreness should ease once you get up and start moving the muscles through the full range of motion. You should feel stronger, not weaker after your workouts.

For building muscle **strength** choose a weight that you can move through the full range of motion with proper form for 6-8 repetitions before the muscle fatigues.

If your goal is muscular **endurance**, choose a lighter weight that allows you to do 12-20 repetitions with good form.

Photo credit: [Jamie Jamieson](#)

Problem: You're not getting enough sleep

What does sleep have to do with your workouts? **It's the single most under-appreciated element of a healthy workout.**

Fitness happens when you task your body's musculoskeletal, cardiopulmonary and metabolic systems beyond their normal capacity, and these systems adapt to the added stress. Resistance training actually creates microscopic tears in your muscle fibers, and the muscles grow and strengthen as the body repairs that damage through its normal regenerative processes.

And, you guessed it, much of that repair work happens while you're sleeping.

When you first begin a fitness program, you may find that your body is asking you for more sleep. You should listen! Most of us don't get enough sleep to begin with, and beginning a workout program will stress your body and leave you needing more rest.

The good news: your body will adjust quickly, and your initial fatigue will lessen. In time you'll find that working out improves the quality of your sleep, so you feel better and more rested every day.

Photo credit: [Jastrow](#)



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Problem: You're dehydrated

Our bodies are 55-60% water by weight, and every cell depends on water to work properly.

When you begin a fitness program, you will need additional water to replace the fluids you lose through sweat and to facilitate all the chemical reactions that occur within your cells.

Think about how a plant looks when it's not getting enough water: droopy and wilted. If you're feeling droopy during and after your workouts, you may simply be dehydrated.

If you work out in hot weather, you'll lose a lot of water through your sweat. And if you exercise in a hot, dry climate, you may lose more water than you realize, because your sweat evaporates rather than accumulating on your skin.

You should always drink before you're thirsty. You won't believe how much more energized you feel when you're properly hydrated.

To stay hydrated during and after your workouts, start drinking water before you exercise. Two hours before your workout, you should drink 15-20 oz. of water.

During your workouts, drink 8-10 oz. every 10 to 20 minutes. And after your workouts, drink 16-24 oz. for every pound of body weight lost.



Photo credit: [Elvert Barnes](#)

Problem:

You're not warming up before you begin your workout

A gradual warm-up at the beginning of your workout is essential. The warm-up signals all the systems of the body to get ready for the increased activity levels to come. It elevates your heart rate gradually to get oxygen and nutrients flowing to all your muscles.

A good warm-up includes fluid, dynamic stretches that wake up the muscles and loosen the joints so they're ready for the more intense workout to come.

You might also do some of your normal workout, just at a lower speed or intensity. So for resistance training, do a set with lighter weights, and if you're a runner, start with a warm-up walk or jog.

How much time should you spend warming up? Five to ten minutes is usually enough for a moderate fitness workout. If you begin your workout feeling stiff or sore or fatigued, choose a slightly longer warm-up at a low intensity. More warm-up isn't necessarily better, though. You don't want to wear out, just warm up. Your body will thank you, and you'll enjoy your workout more.



Photo credit: [Amy Lawes](#)

Problem:

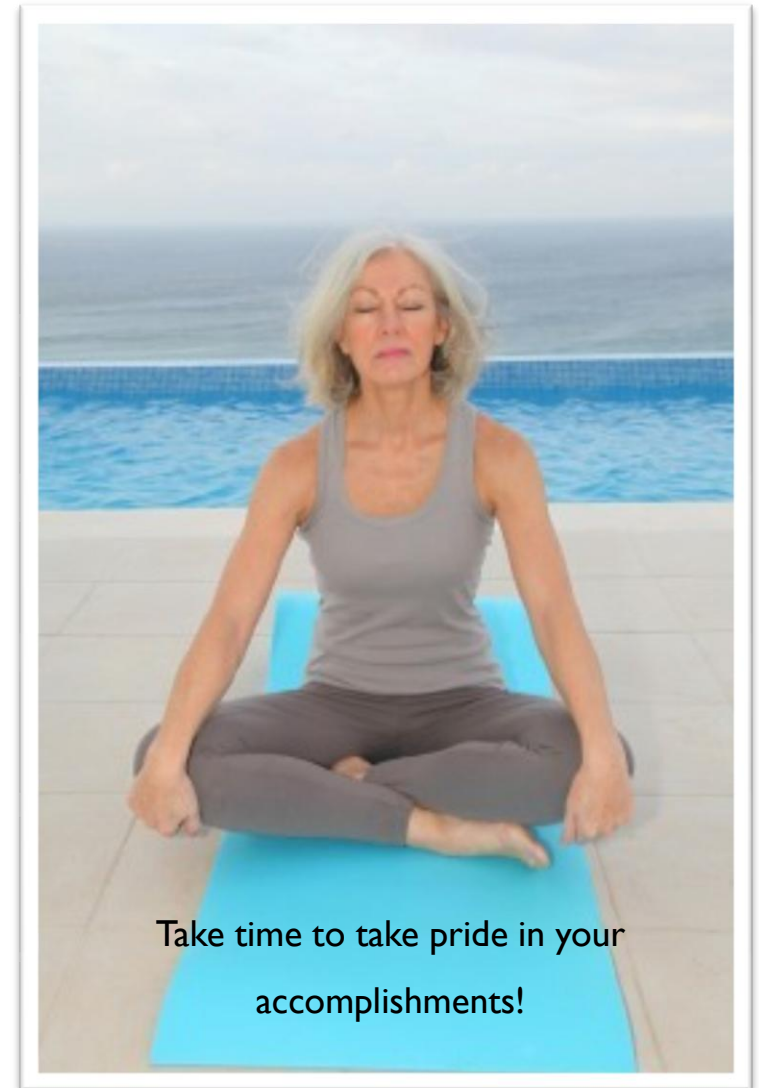
You're not cooling down at the end

Just as you need to ease into your workout with a warm-up, you also need to transition out of your workout with a cool-down.

A cool-down helps your muscles relax, promotes removal of waste products from your cells, and helps your heart adjust gradually to the decreased demands.

To make your workouts feel good, be sure to include a stretching routine as part of your cool-down. Stretching your muscles immediately after your workout, while they're still warm and pliable, helps you maintain elasticity in your muscles, which can improve your strength and range of motion.

You can get a good stretch without injuring your muscles and tendons if you stretch each time you work out while your muscles are still warm. Your cool down and stretch helps your body relax and return to normal, it helps your muscles lengthen and become more elastic, and it gives you a great opportunity to enjoy the endorphins that boost your mood.



Take time to take pride in your accomplishments!

Photo credit: [Cecille Agullo](#)

Problem:

You're not varying the intensity of your workouts and allowing for recovery days

If you're trying to increase your fitness level, you need to get familiar with the concept of periodization.

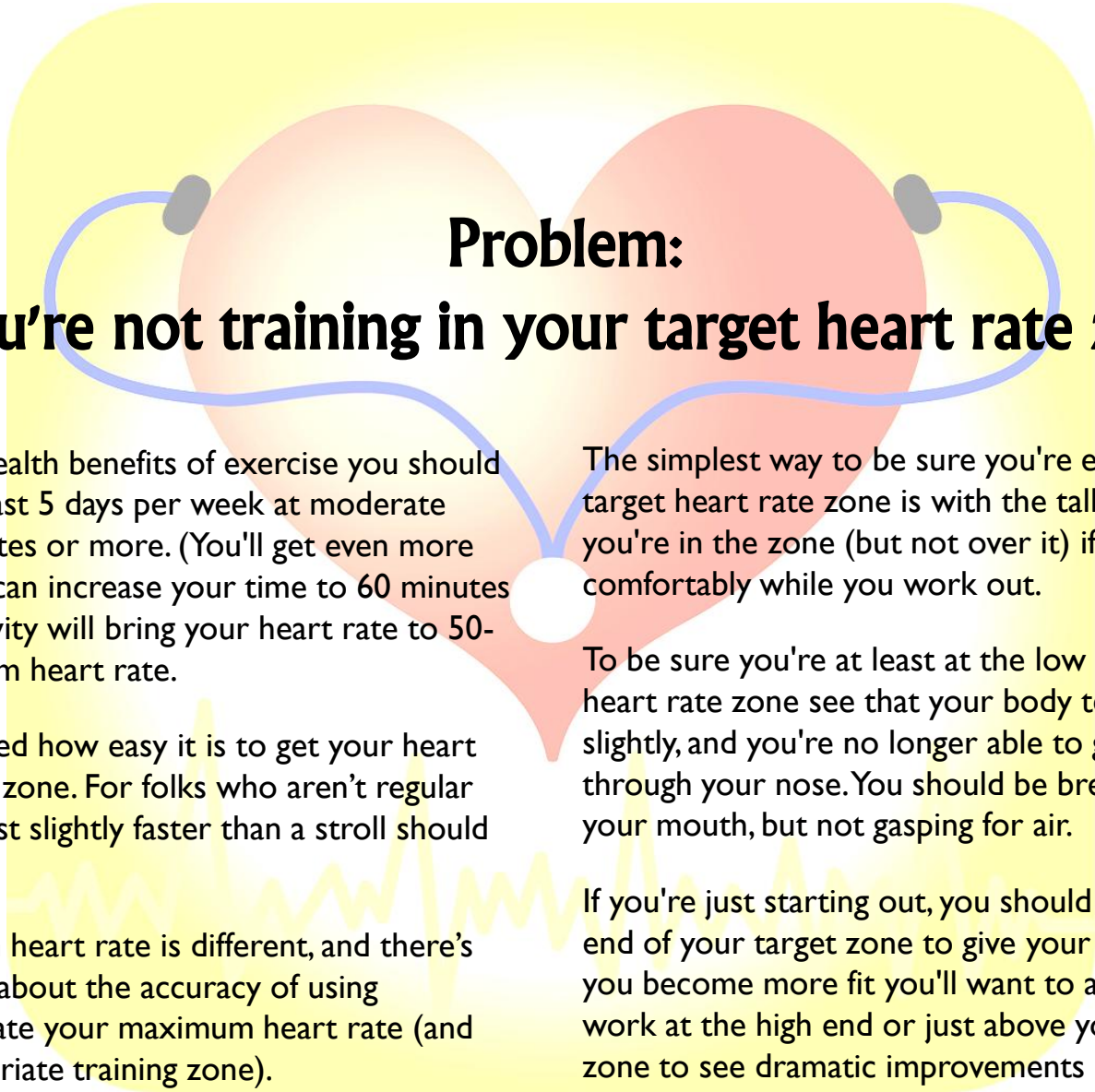
Exercise scientists have determined that our bodies respond to exercise best when we design a program that allows the body just enough time to recover between workouts.

You may think that more is better, but when it comes to exercise, that's not always the case. Studies have shown that our bodies respond when we vary the intensity of our workouts. So you need to alternate high intensity workouts with lower intensity workouts and recovery days.

You might want to include sprint interval training twice per week, and alternate lower-intensity exercise on the other days. Even highly trained athletes perform better when they limit high-intensity workouts to three or four sessions per week and include lower intensity workouts on alternate days.



Maintaining the same level of intensity every day can lead to overtraining or monotony.



Problem:

You're not training in your target heart rate zone

To get most of the health benefits of exercise you should be working out at least 5 days per week at moderate intensity for 30 minutes or more. (You'll get even more health benefit if you can increase your time to 60 minutes daily.) Moderate activity will bring your heart rate to 50-70% of your maximum heart rate.

You might be surprised how easy it is to get your heart rate into your target zone. For folks who aren't regular exercisers walking just slightly faster than a stroll should be enough.

Everyone's maximum heart rate is different, and there's quite a bit of debate about the accuracy of using calculations to estimate your maximum heart rate (and therefore the appropriate training zone).

The simplest way to be sure you're exercising in a moderate target heart rate zone is with the talk test. You can tell that you're in the zone (but not over it) if you can still talk comfortably while you work out.

To be sure you're at least at the low end of your target heart rate zone see that your body temperature has risen slightly, and you're no longer able to get enough breath just through your nose. You should be breathing deeply through your mouth, but not gasping for air.

If you're just starting out, you should be working at the low end of your target zone to give your body time to adapt. As you become more fit you'll want to add short intervals of work at the high end or just above your target heart rate zone to see dramatic improvements in your aerobic capacity.

Problem:

You always do the same workout

Doing the same workout every time stalls your progress and becomes boring quickly! Your body has a remarkable ability to respond to changing demands, so give it some variety.

Once you've built up a base of strength and aerobic capacity, you can break through your plateau by adding intervals of greater intensity or by changing up your routine.

If you've reached a plateau on your bench press, try adding an incline to engage surrounding muscles in a slightly different way. If your aerobic training is stalled, try mixing in a day or two per week of short sprint training or a different variety of aerobic work.

You'll be amazed by how quickly your body will respond to the new challenges, and your brain will be more engaged and enthusiastic, too.

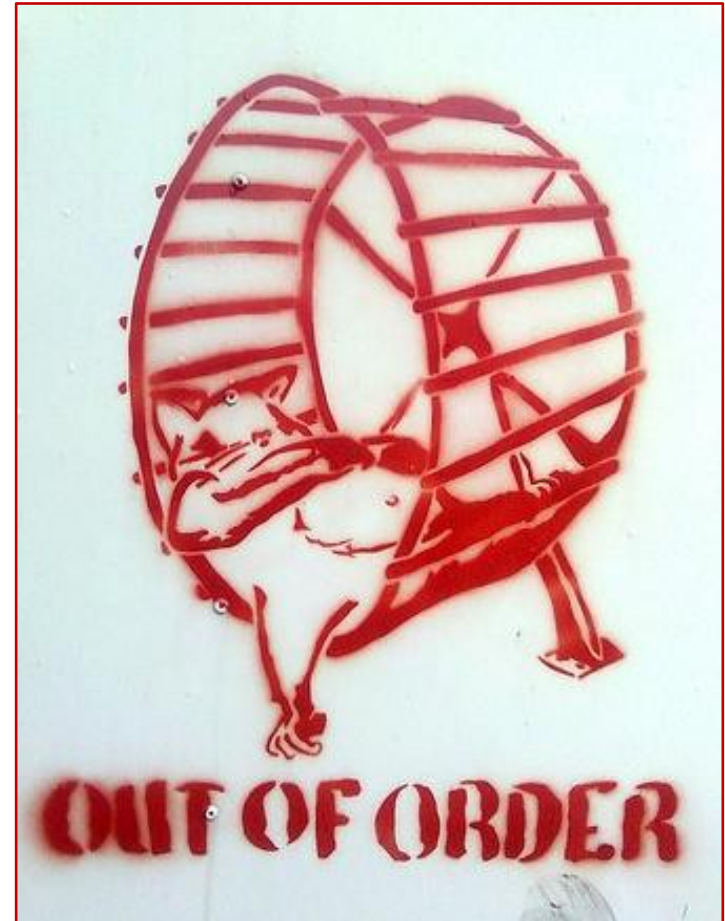


Photo credit: [Martin de la Iglesia](#)

Problem:

You exercise outdoors without dressing properly

Taking your workout outdoors can be a great treat. Sunshine, fresh air and the beauties of nature can really enhance your mood and increase your enjoyment of your workouts. But if you're not properly dressed for the elements your workout can quickly turn into a miserable experience.

In cold weather think layers. When you start out, you need to be protected from wind and cold. As you work out, your body temperature will rise, and you'll begin to sweat. Because sweat on your skin can quickly lead to hypothermia, you'll want to wear fabrics that wick your sweat away from your skin. As you warm up, you may need to unzip a jacket or remove a layer. But you'll want those layers back when you begin your cool down so the sweat on your skin and clothing doesn't evaporate and cause a dangerous drop in body temperature.

In hot, humid weather be sure you're wearing lightweight clothes in light colors. You'll want fabric that allows your sweat to evaporate, which helps cool your body temperature. (Just don't forget to replace your lost fluids with plenty of water before, during and after your workout.)



Dressing for the weather can make all the difference between a workout that feels great and one that takes a major toll on your body's systems.

Photo credit: [Tonp1](#)

Problem:

You have muscle imbalances or improper movement patterns

As we age, we often accumulate bad posture habits or injuries that can alter our ability to move properly. You may have joint impingements, muscle imbalances or injuries that affect your ability to perform exercises with correct form.

Improper movement through the kinetic chain and the inability to maintain proper stabilization/mobility patterns can lead to injuries and further movement problems.

Learning the right way to move your muscles and joints can make all the difference in a workout that feels good vs. one that is uncomfortable, painful or even dangerous.

Before you begin a workout program, get clearance from your physician, and be sure to research the proper movement patterns before you begin.



Photo credit: [Mike Lewis](#)

The Bottom Line

Everybody's looking for the quick fix when it comes to our looks, our weight and our health. Unfortunately, there is no quick fix, and if you try to go from couch potato to triathlete overnight you'll feel miserable or even get hurt. Your body has the remarkable ability to adapt to the extra work you're asking it to do in your workouts, but it needs time to adapt gradually, especially the older you get.

Bottom line, exercise should feel good. If it doesn't, you're doing too much too soon, or you're overlooking important rules of good form and technique. Take the time to learn the right intensity and right form for you, and you'll discover that exercise makes you feel great all day long and helps you perform better in every area of your life.



Photo credit: [Cathy Yeulet](#)

About the author

LeeAnn Langdon is an ACE-certified personal trainer dedicated to helping people “of a certain age” (you know who you are) integrate good fitness and nutrition habits into their everyday lives.

In addition to training clients and managing the Prime of Life Fitness website, she enjoys gardening, cooking, and taking long walks under the brilliant blue Colorado sky.

Prime of Life Fitness in Denver, CO teaches Baby Boomers and Seniors the life-long fitness habits they need to age vibrantly and independently.

Let's keep in touch!

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