

From Illness to Injury, When to Stop Working Out

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(PhysOrg.com) -- With all the messages about the importance of regular exercise, few pointers are given on when not to continue with your regimen. But it's just as important to know when to alter or stop your workout because of illness or injury.

Rose Smith, UC associate professor of rehabilitation sciences, says any acute injury should put an end to your [workout](#) immediately. That includes any breaks or hearing a "pop" with pain during a workout.

"If you can't walk, or can't walk normally, you should see a doctor," says Smith. "Don't try to 'work through' pain. Pain is an indicator that something may be wrong."

Pain during a normal routine can also signal an overuse injury, like a stress fracture or tendon [inflammation](#), says Smith. It's especially counter-productive to push through the pain on these injuries. Address pain early and you will be off your routine for a shorter period of time.

While recuperating from an overuse injury or low-grade sprain, Smith recommends modifying your existing routine or focusing on different muscles entirely while you recover.

"Cross training allows you to stay fit without interfering with the [healing process](#) of your injury," she says. "You can exercise with weights or a theraband if the injury is in your lower body or use a [stationary bike](#) if you need to rest your upper body. Swimming or walking in the water may be ideal as well, if you need to reduce the pressure on your legs."

When returning to a training routine, Smith recommends working back into it gradually, taking into account both the length of your break and previous fitness level. If you've been away from the gym for less than a week, it's safe to start at 75 percent of your original intensity. If you've been away for longer, try starting at half that and gradually increase from there. After changing your routine, you may notice soreness several hours or several days after the workout. While it's not unusual to experience soreness, try light, repetitive exercise in the days following to help recover.

For colds or light illness, Smith says it's fine to modify your activity as needed—just as long as you're not contagious, don't have a fever and take extra precautions to stay hydrated. For a case of the flu or a fever over 100 degrees, stay home and rest.

To reduce the risk of [injury](#) during a workout, Smith offers the following pointers:

? Warm up the [muscle](#)/joints you will be using. Post-injury, you may need to warm up longer to prepare the tissue.

? To avoid overuse injuries, vary the intensity and type of your workouts. Include some type of weight training and cool down with stretching a few times a week.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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