

ASK *Fernando!*

By Fernando Paredes, CPT, NASM, NSCA



Q. *It's a New Year and I really want to get in great shape this year! In previous years I've quit after a few weeks and I do not want that to happen again. Do you have any tips that will help me stick with my program?*

A. Definitely! Before I get into them, let me say that you are not alone. In fact, did you know that 61% of people who begin an exercise program dropout after the first 6-8 weeks? I don't want you to be a part of that statistic this year. You CAN beat the odds and you can stay motivated this time! You just need to do these three things:

I. You need to follow a properly designed program. Based on your individual needs, there are many ways to go about this. However, please make sure your exercise and nutrition program at least meet these basic general guidelines:

RESISTANCE TRAINING

1. Use total body exercises.
2. Work your core.
3. Train 2-3 times per week.

NURTITION

1. Follow a high protein, moderate fat, low starch diet.
2. Eat 4 - 6 moderate sized meals a day.
3. Take in fewer calories than you expend during the day.

CARDIO

1. Use interval cardio training when you are ready for it.
2. Train 2-3 times per week.
3. Do no more than 30 minutes of cardio per session.

II. You need to have a firm belief in your mind that you WILL succeed! Believe me when I tell you that wherever you mind leads you, your body will follow. The mental attitude you display on a daily basis will make or break your success.

VISUALITATION EXERCISE

Picture in your mind what you want to look like, the energy you will have, how much better your clothes will fit, the compliments you'll receive, and how much your life will improve. Really SEE it and go through a few minutes of your daily life in this new healthy fit body that you have pictured. Repeat this mental exercise EVERY-DAY 2-3 times a day for best results.

III. You need to accept the fact that work is involved. Funny how many can see the logic in this when it applies to other things but not when it comes to their health and fitness. For example, would you just magically get paid your regular salary for the



rest of your life for just working a few weeks or be able to drive your car for the rest of your life on only one fill-up?

If you do, tell me your secret! If you don't, why would you ever think it possible to get healthier, more fit, lose weight, increase your energy and be able to maintain it for the rest of your life by only sticking to your fitness program for a few weeks?

Doesn't make sense does it? Come on, aren't you worth more than that? Of course you are! Listen, practice these three points and don't be surprised months later when you look in the mirror and you see the NEW YOU that you pictured in your mind staring back at you!

Q. *My legs are a real problem area for me. I work them three times a week on the machines and then do cardio for 40 minutes 5-6 times a week. Yet they're still not shaping up or getting any smaller. What should I do?*

A. Wow. That is a lot of working out. In fact, I think it's too much. Let me share a key principle that needs to be understood in order to get maximum results for many, if not all fitness goals.

More is NOT better. BETTER is better!

When you exercise, you break down muscle tissue. Then your body needs some rest time in order to rebuild and make the changes you're after like losing fat or building muscle.

If you do the right amount of exercise, it looks like this:
Workout => muscle damage => rest time & good nutrition => recuperation => physiological overcompensation => positive physical change occurs => build muscle or lose fat.

If you do too much exercise, it looks like this:
Workout => muscle damage => workout => muscle damage => physiological overstress => negative physical change occurs => overtraining, burn-out & no results.

Not good. To solve your problem you need to work smarter and not more often. Let's try this: First, do NO exercise at all for one week. This will help your nervous system recover. When you resume, use the following routine for the next four weeks:

SINGLE-LEG TOE TOUCH	2 X 15
BACK LUNGE	2 X 15
BALL SQUAT	2 X 12
CABLE LEG CURL ON FLOOR	2 X 12

Key points for this routine:

- Reduce your rest periods to 30-60 seconds in between sets.
- Use a resistance that will be challenging for the required set and rep scheme.

- Use a slow, controlled execution of all your exercises.
- Work your legs ONLY 2 times per week (ex. Monday, Thursday).
- Limit Cardio to 30 minutes, 2 times a week (ex. Tuesday, Friday).

Remember the goal with your workouts is to STIMULATE the body to change; not to see how much exercise it can tolerate before it burns out. Do yourself a favor and don't get trapped in that dead-end "more is better" concept ever again. If you do, your body will be at a dead-end too!

Q. *Which is the best "fat-burner" supplement? I see so many advertised on TV and magazines and I want to use a real strong one to help me lose 30 lbs. since I can't fit a lot of exercise in my schedule.*

A. Oh boy, am I going to open up a "can of worms" on this one. Oh well! I'll give it to you straight. While there is much debate and conflicting studies about the use of supplements for fat loss, the fact of the matter is that there are certain products that will increase metabolic rate and fat-burning such as those containing, but not limited to, lipotropics, L-Carnitine and even good ole' caffeine when used properly.

The problem lies in the belief that the "fat-burner" will do it all for you. People think that all you need to do is take a pill and the fat will melt off your body before your very eyes. To make matters worse, many of these unscrupulous supplement companies make you believe it as well. Magical fat burning is simply NOT true.

"Fat-burner" supplements CANNOT REPLACE sound nutrition and exercise for fat loss. They can only enhance fat burning if, and only if, you already have your diet and exercise program working in proper order.

Get your nutrition and exercise program in order first before you ever think about taking any kind of fat-burner. Once you've been consistent with that, THEN you can experiment with supplements to help accelerate the process. If you don't, you'll be wasting your money, time or worse, putting your health at risk. Isn't your health the very thing you are trying to improve by losing weight in the first place?



Fernando Paredes, CPT, NASM, NSCA is a functional fitness specialist sought out for his expert guidance in the areas of low-back re-conditioning, functional fitness, weight loss, sports training and anti-aging fitness. He regularly appears on Comcast Network's "Your Morning" television show and has received much attention for his innovative style and exercise approach. His private exercise studio, Fusion Fitness Studio in Doylestown, PA caters to all fitness levels seeking physical improvement. ASK Fernando YOUR exercise and nutrition questions by e-mailing askfernando@phillyfitmagazine.com