

Week Four: a setback and chance to regroup

Joe Ferry

Before starting this fitness program three weeks ago, I didn't think much about nutrition.

I ate what I wanted to eat, when I wanted to eat it. Protein? Carbs? Simple sugars? Trans fats?

Those words weren't in my vocabulary.

I suppose in the back of my mind I knew the difference between good and bad foods. There was always a hint of guilt when I stopped at McDonald's for a couple of cheeseburgers. And I knew that warm soft pretzel slathered with mustard probably wasn't the best choice for a snack.

But it never seemed to deter me.

And then I met Fernando Paredes, the owner of Fusion Fitness Studio in Doylestown. Spend a few minutes with him going over your food diary and suddenly eating takes on a whole new dimension. He scans each entry careful-



Personal trainer Fernando Paredes demonstrates where I should be feeling the effects of this exercise.



ly, scribbling notes and drawing smiley faces to show his satisfaction.

For Fernando, good nutrition starts with a hearty breakfast full of protein.

“Protein stabilizes your blood sugar so you make better choices throughout the day,” he tells me. “You need protein in the morning to kick-start your metabolism.”

He recommends eating four-to-six moderate-sized meals a day to keep the metabolism stoked. For most people, a diet of high protein, moderate fat and low starch should work, he says.

Limit consumption of processed foods to only about 20 percent per day, with lots of colorful vegetables and plenty of water (64 ounces a day), he says.

It's not always easy to follow those recommendations, and checking food labels can be confusing and frustrating. Low fat doesn't always mean low calories and we have to be savvy consumers to know the difference.

But as I take this effort to the next level, I know nutrition is going to play a big part in my success.

After losing four pounds in my first two weeks, Fernando kicked up my workout a notch for Week-Three. He pushed me a little harder, trying to get me to do more repetitions of each exer-

cise with better form to maximize their positive effects.

We also added a second studio workout, this one with his associate Grace, another personal trainer.

In contrast to Fernando's booming, enthusiastic approach, Grace is more laid back. She observes each movement carefully, offering suggestions and gentle encouragement as we go through the workout.

As we wrap-up the last exercise, Grace throws me a curve ball: we're going to do them all again.

It's tough, but I plow through them. My legs are burning and my arms ache but we make it through the second set.

“It will get easier,” she tells me.

I was disappointed when I stopped in at the studio to weigh-in this week. The scale showed I had gained back two of the four pounds I had lost.

What happened?

For one, I blame it on the Phillies. We have a tradition on our house of tailgating to celebrate the opening of the baseball season.

Like most fans, we grill hot dogs and hamburgers, except we do it in our backyard, not in the parking lot of Citizens Bank Park.

Anyway, I ate like a pig at our party. I thought the fact that we bought turkey dogs and made turkey burgers, I would splurge a little bit. Add in the yummy angel food cupcakes with chocolate chips, a couple of plates of pasta salad and a few glasses of iced tea and I felt like I had undone all the progress I had made to date.

Nonsense, said Fernando and Grace. It's unlikely that one day of binging like that could result in a two-pound weight gain.

Rather, they said, it is probably the normal reaction of my body to the exer-



Stretching out on the exercise ball helps keep the back loose and the blood flowing.

cise. As muscles are re-awakened, they absorb nutrients. It's not unusual, they said, for a person who begins an exercise program to see some weight gain in the first few weeks.

Taken as a whole, Fernando said, a two-pound weight loss in three weeks is a perfectly acceptable rate. I have to remember that my number-one goal in this fitness program is to become more healthy. Weight loss is just a pleasant byproduct.

Despite what the scale says, I do feel better. My clothes seem to fit better and I definitely have more energy. For now, Fernando's only recommendation is to make sure I drink 64 ounces of water a day, something I have not been doing with any regularity.

“You might come in next week and lose four or five pounds,” he said.

Do you have an inspirational fitness story to tell? Tips to share? I would love to hear from you. Drop me an email at joeferry@buckscountyherald.com.