

Why You Need to Know About Progressive Overload

Let's start by talking about the concept of overload. When we add work, or load, to muscles, we ask them to perform at a level above what they normally deal with. This is how we address our goals of a better-looking physique, better endurance, fat loss, better performance, or whatever the particular goals are.

So it's clear that in order to achieve our goals, we need to stress our bodies with resistance and cardiovascular work. We need to meet this challenge in a way that gets results without injury. We've all encountered the folks who join the gym on January 2nd, and they're gone by the middle of February. Generally, they are driven by their goals, but without any knowledge on how to go about it safely and effectively. They usually throw themselves into the most challenging exercises and schedule they can do, and that's why they can't continue after a few weeks. And it's back to the sofa, with injuries, muscle pain, and the conviction that exercise should be avoided!

So how do we go about this? The key is one of the most important training principles. The Progressive Overload Principle must be applied carefully to avoid the above scenario. The body will adapt to changes in load and challenge. But the load and intensity must be changed gradually to avoid undue stress on the muscles, tendons and ligaments. Adequate rest between sets and between training sessions is essential. Too much exercise without enough recovery time, or inappropriate load can cause tissue damage. A good training effect takes place when tissues are gradually, or progressively, overloaded, and then allowed to recover and gradually build up to

greater strength. A good rule of thumb is 48-72 hours rest/recovery between resistance training sessions.

Another scenario that the Progressive Overload Principle addresses is the person who has not changed the load or intensity for quite some time. He may be discouraged, thinking that he goes to the gym several days a week, and faithfully follows the same routine, with little or no recent change in his body. The body will not make positive change until we force it to! If the body doesn't receive a new challenge periodically, it has absolutely no reason to improve.

The bottom line is that gradual change in the load and intensity over a period of several weeks will help bring you to your goals. And then it's time for completely new challenges!

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