



PC Conditioning

Personal Training for all Levels

Winter 2007

Common Fitness & Wellness Questions and Answers

Q: How can I obtain a leaner mid-section and improve my abdominal area?

A: Often an area of concern for both males and females, the abdominal area is one that requires hard work and dedication. Many exercisers are under the false assumption that old-fashioned crunches and sit-ups will help alleviate fat around the mid-section. This is not entirely true. To develop and tone the abdominals, a regimen consisting of a combination of proper nutrition, cardiovascular work, and core exercises will each aid in the improvement of the infamous abdominal area. Each plays an integral role in shedding fat, improving posture, and decreasing risk of injury to the low back and abdomen. Remember to incorporate exercises that include the primary muscles of the body's "core" (i.e. low back, abdominals, and obliques) to achieve total muscle balance. For example, do not perform crunch after crunch for your abdominals without including exercises that will strengthen the low back. Failure to achieve muscle balance may increase your risk of injury.

Q: Which is better when performing strength training: a total body workout, or a split routine where individual muscles are isolated?

A: Time is an integral component to one's workout routine. Due to high amounts of work hours, busy family schedules, and various commitments, the majority of people do not have a lot of time to be at the gym. If you can't get to the gym frequently, but can commit a solid hour or so, a total body workout may suit you best. On the other hand, if you are able to visit the gym more frequently and for longer durations, performing a split-routine may be best. The ultimate key is to maintain variety and balance in your workout routine, which will help eliminate training plateaus.

Q: How many days per week should I perform cardiovascular exercise?

A: According to the American Heart Association (AHA), "For health benefits to the heart, lungs and circulation, perform any moderate-to-vigorous-intensity aerobic activity for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week at 50-75 percent of your maximum heart rate. You can accumulate 30 minutes in 10 or 15 minute sessions." The activity should involve the large muscle groups (e.g., walking, running, cycling, and swimming). You can estimate your maximum heart rate by subtracting your age from 220. You can quickly determine if your intensity is too high by taking the "talk test"; if you cannot maintain a conversation with your exercise partner while exercising, then your intensity is too high. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) also recommends that you include resistance and flexibility training in your exercise program. If you are not currently exercising, please consult your physician before beginning any exercise program. Consistency is the key to success in any exercise program; choose an activity that you enjoy and are likely to continue throughout your adult life. For more information contact the ACSM (<http://www.acsm.org>).

Q: How long should I wait between exercise sessions?

A: Cardiovascular exercise can, and should be performed, most days of the week. Total body strength training, on the other hand, should not typically be performed on a daily basis. Muscle tissue needs time (in the 24-48 hour range) to adequately repair itself. Therefore, work towards an every

other day system when it comes to strength training.

Q: What are some forms of physical activity that I can do without having to actually go to the gym?

A: While going to the gym can be monotonous for some, there are a plethora of activities to choose from that can help enhance one's health. These include the following: outdoor sports (i.e. skiing), washing the car, cleaning the house, gardening, and shoveling snow [be careful of your back!].

Q: What are some of the best ways to recover from a hard workout?

A: Recovery tactics are often way overlooked by fitness enthusiasts. Reward yourself after an intense exercise session or after successfully completing a fitness goal- you deserve it. Recovery techniques include the following: getting a massage, enjoying a spa-related treatment, soaking in the hot tub, taking a steam or sauna, napping, and reading a book. Make the activity both relaxing and pleasurable.

Q: Is it necessary that I stretch? If so, when should I stretch?

A: Flexibility, like nutrition, cardio, and strength training, is a crucial element of one's fitness regimen. Stretching allows greater freedom of movement and improved posture, increases physical and mental relaxation, releases muscle tension and soreness and reduces risk of injury. Research has shown that static stretching should occur primarily after a workout. It provides an additional cool-down and is a great restorative component to a fitness routine.

To your health,
-Paul Connolly

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About the Author

Certified through the National Strength and Conditioning Association as a personal trainer (NSCA-CPT), Paul possesses a degree in Exercise Science with a background in anatomy & physiology, human performance, and nutrition. He has been involved in the fitness industry since 2003 and has contributed to local and national media publications as a featured health and wellness columnist. The founder of suburban Boston-based personal training consulting service PC Conditioning (<http://www.pconditioning.com>), Paul is an advocate of strength training for all ages and enjoys working with fitness enthusiasts of all levels. His diverse clientele includes high school and collegiate athletes, stay-at-home Moms, corporate 9-5ers, brides-to be, and seniors. Paul's passion for fitness has led him to engage his clients in all major components of fitness including cardiovascular conditioning, nutrition, strength training, and flexibility. Adult AED and CPR-certified, Paul is available by appointment only. He can be reached via e-mail at paul@pconditioning.com or telephone at 617-834-1502.

"Understanding the fundamental concepts of exercise and optimizing daily function are key concepts in the training programs I outline for my clients. Injury prevention, improving self-confidence, and heightening one's knowledge of physical fitness through consistent hard work and dedication are all integral components of the approach I take with my clients. I see many people making similar mistakes in their conditioning programs and I make it a point to correct these areas. I demand 100% effort from my clients and make it a point to consistently educate them about the necessary lifestyle modifications required to achieve their respective goals."

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