

GETTING HURT: *The Easiest Gym Injuries*

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Getting injured becomes much easier as we age. Most people use gyms to fit that squeeze that hour of exercise somehow into your day. Preventing injury should be a daily goal for everyone, and sadly when it happens it can take a huge toll on your body and psyche. It hits your wallet, you may become highly immobile, depression is likely, and it is preventable! Nobody wants that right? Here are 6 ways to hurt yourself at the gym or health club, with advice for staying injury free.

1. Skipping the warm up. Even if your schedule is tight, don't cut corners on the very important warm-up. Easing your way into your workout will gradually increase your heart rate and get the blood flowing into your muscles. Not only does it help make your body feel more prepared to work hard, but it can also prevent pulling a muscle.

2. Holding onto the treadmill. When your hands are stationary, you risk an awkward step or having your foot touch the rail. This can put your body in an unnatural running position, which could end up with you flying off the back of it. A slip easily results in straining your shoulders or back. If you're holding on because you're worried about falling off, then slow down the pace and speed it up as you feel comfortable.

3. Doing the same thing every time. While it's good to get into a routine, this is a great way to get a repetitive stress injury. Be sure to alternate between cardio machines, try out different fitness classes and weight machines, and adapt a cross-training approach. Not only will you help give overused muscles a break, but you'll have more fun working out too.

4. Doing too much. Ease into new exercise routines. When you strength train, if increasing to a heavier weight, shoot for eight reps instead of 15. If bike riding is new to you, ride at a moderate pace first, and as your body gets used to it, gradually increase your speed. You won't be able to go to the gym if you end up really sore or with a pulled muscle, so ease up on the gung-ho mindset and increase intensity as you feel ready.

5. Bouncing while stretching. This is a big no-no since you could be causing microtrauma to your muscles. As these injuries heal and scar, they can actually make you less flexible, undoing all the work you've done. So get into a stretch and stay there to reap the benefits. Stretch to a range-of-motion where you feel your muscles lengthening, but you shouldn't feel any pain.

6. Wear proper shoes. Most chronic injuries occur from faulty footwear. With sports, a specific shoe is critical to prevent major injuries to your ankles and knees. If you play basketball, wear basketball shoes. If on the squash court, a squash shoe is critical. Even if you run on the treadmill, wear a shoe built for running/ cross-training. One 5 minute game can easily lead into a 2 month bed rest. The \$40 for a pair of sport shoes vastly outweighs doctor bills and loss of income that in time, will happen.