

Free argumentative essay on over- exercising and the importance of moderation

[Health & Medicine](#), [Obesity](#)



There have been numerous advancements throughout the twenty-first century in fitness techniques and body training. Athletes are lifting more, running faster, jumping higher, and performing better than ever. The classification of obesity as a disease by the American Medical Association makes the problem of obesity in America as serious as diabetes or cancer. Due to this, there has been a surge in the amount of exercise that people are getting, to the point that many people exercise every day of the week. However, too much of a good thing often leads to a bad thing, and such is the case with exercise. While moderate exercise keeps a person in shape and invigorates them, over-exercising puts excessive strain on the body, causing the possibility of health problems to increase. Why do people over-exercise? What risks do they increase for themselves when they are over-exercising? Is the issue of over-exercising only a byproduct of the AMA's position on obesity? Although it is important to exercise regularly to maintain a higher level of physical health, too much exercise without appropriate amounts of rest can be just as detrimental to health as inactivity.

People often over-exercise due to the increasing perceptions of Americans as an obese people – Americans are often claimed to require more physical activity, as obesity rates are increasing in this country (USA Today). Media inundates the public with images of toned bodies, thin waists, big breasts and sculpted legs, treating these figures as the norm rather than the exception. Media depicts women with larger body types as undesirable, as being thin is directly correlated with being attractive. Men's body types, while not being as equally strict (fat men are looked upon with slightly more

positive social acceptance), are also inspired to become muscular and toned with various images in sports media and fashion magazines. These incredibly high standards of beauty and rigid levels of acceptability for people contribute to a culture that is anxious about getting thin, leading to depression and uneven priorities for many individuals when it comes to diet and exercise.

As previously mentioned, statistics indicate that American is becoming increasingly obese, with more than 30% of children with diabetes having Type 2, a condition which is usually caused with poor diet and obesity (Zinczenko, 2002). Cultural factors that contribute to this obesity include the increasingly sedentary lifestyle that comes from a society moving from a labor-based culture to a consumption-based culture; we are less likely to get up and move around due to not needing to physically perform hard labor as much. This also comes from the sociocultural factors of not having as much access to (or education on) healthy food and exercising correctly, as well as globalization and technology creating conveniences for us that do not require us to move as much on our own. Because of this, a culture has been created where Americans realize their obesity, and work to exercise and eat better in order to fix it. However, this same motivation to get unhealthy (and shake the stigma of obesity that occurs because of such a declaration that America has an obesity epidemic) can also lead to over-exercising, as it becomes a pathological need to make sure one does not get overweight. Because people have become more body-conscious, given a combination of these declarations of obesity and the increasing standards of beauty in media and print, “ exercise is at the core of everyday activities” (Ebony).

Benefits of exercise are many, including making muscles and the heart stronger, as well as losing weight and staving off heart disease and diabetes, among other things. However, “ exercise can become compulsive for some people, many of whom start exercising with the intent of losing weight” (Ebony). Because of this, there is a mistaken assumption that the more you exercise, the more weight you directly lose. This mistake tends to lead to over-exercising, something which must be addressed and taken seriously as a condition. The obsessive desire to make sure one does not become a statistic has taken its toll on many people who pathologically take care of themselves – they care about their appearance and health to a degree that it itself becomes unhealthy.

Many people over-exercise to an obsessive degree - this is a condition known as ‘ exercise bulimia,’ a psychological disorder in which someone compulsively exercises in order to lose weight, with the goal of burning as many fat calories and fat reserves so they can get thin (ULifeline). However, exercise bulimics do so to an excessive degree, to the point where it can get dangerous to their health. Often, this happens because the body is not given appropriate rest in order to recover and appropriately manage the exercise they have already undertaken. This can lead to varying levels of bodily damage being undertaken on one’s body, especially since most exercise bulimics do not eat enough or take in enough nutrition to justify these higher exercise levels (ULifeline). Other physical effects of over-exercising include substantial reproductive consequences for women, including a cessation or reduction in menstruation. Over-exercisers have a lower ability to intake oxygen, as well as a lower level of blood lactate and less of an ability to

absorb lactic acid. Their hypothalamus can become dysfunctional, and muscle wasting can occur as a result of increased response to cortisol (ULifeline). All of these physical symptoms are some of the more extreme cases of what happens when over-exercising occurs, but they can have dramatic effects on the body if left unchecked.

Often, exercise bulimia goes unnoticed due to the perception that exercise is healthy, and someone who exercises cannot have something wrong with them; however, exercise bulimics over-exercise, leading to a life that is scheduled around exercise and nothing else. Compulsive over-exercisers will often work out even when they are sick, become depressed if they are not allowed or able to exercise, miss other important social or work functions in order to exercise, and define their sense of self by how they are performing in workouts. Exercise bulimia is not quite the same as over-exercising (as there is a food component, since they will binge large amounts of food quickly and exercise instead of 'purging' to get rid of the guilt) (ULifeline). However, both conditions have similar side effects and symptoms, and it is often difficult to determine if one is simply over-exercising or has a full-on activity disorder.

Over-exercising is counter-productive to the reasons that people exercise. While exercise itself is an important part of bodily health, increasing metabolism and allowing fat calories to burn, as well as increasing cardiovascular and muscle health, too much exercise can unnecessarily fatigue the body and lead to things like weak bones, injury, depression and reproductive issues (ULifeline). Cardiac arrest can even occur if the heart is put under too much cardiovascular stress (ULifeline). To that end, a logical

approach to exercise would allow someone to make sure they do not over-exercise; however, over-exercising is itself a pathological and irrational behavior, as it comes from a desperate desire to look better and to make sure they are doing everything they can to be healthy.

America has put a target on obesity as a disease that leads to other health problems later in life. However, the fervor with which obesity is attacked can work against the mission of the attack by encouraging people to over-exercise. When this is the case, over-exercising can be just as detrimental as inactivity. Much of this happens due to the stigma against obesity in America, which often leads to unhealthy body images. This is a phenomenon known as body dysmorphia, in which people have a different idea of what their bodies are than they actually are. Most people have enough trouble getting motivated to exercise that it becomes outlandish to think there are people who exercise too much. However, for these people, they actually become addicted to exercise, due in part to the societal training that comes from people being “trained to believe that exercise is a great thing”; even though it is, “too much of a good thing, is simply not good” (Russell). These people believe that they always have more work they need to do on their bodies, and so will fill up so much of their time exercising that their bodies start to react poorly to it.

There are many signs that can indicate whether or not one is over-exercising. First, over-exercisers tend to be exhausted at the end of a workout, instead of energized; exercise is meant to release endorphins to give you more energy, and failing to do that is a sign that you are pushing too hard (Russell). Over-exercisers are often moody and irritable, due to the

fatigue that comes from excessive workouts; they are simply too tired and exhausted to be patient with others or themselves. Sleeping irregularities are also common with over-exercisers, as they will either sleep too much or suffer from insomnia. This comes from the body's interpretation of over-exercising as a stressor; cortisol is released into the bloodstream, making it difficult to get to sleep. Over-exercisers also feel a heaviness in their legs, which often comes from muscle fatigue; usually, that feeling goes away once the muscles repair and recharge, but over-exercisers do not let this repair happen. The immune systems of over-exercisers tend to break down along with your body, so you are more likely to become ill. When you do get sick, it also takes you more time to get better. Over-exercisers are also sore all the time, as they do not allow their bodies time to rest and repair those muscles (as previously mentioned). Sometimes, over-exercisers will also experience depression and a lack of motivation, as exercising becomes a chore and something that is necessary instead of something you feel like doing. This is due to over-exercising being shown to decrease mood and energy (Russell). In order to combat exercise bulimia and over-exercising, it is imperative to address issues of body dysmorphia and increase responsibility on the part of fitness trainers and gym employees to make sure that those who exercise are doing so in a healthy and moderated manner (USA Today). While this can seem contradictory, due to the increased push for Americans to exercise, as well as the conflicting business interests that would go into gym employees making people exercise less, it is necessary to help people achieve a managed and tempered approach to exercise that does not endanger their body just as much as inactivity would. The solution is to create a moderate

exercise plan that allows for the results one wants, without over-exercising and stressing the body to an unhealthy degree. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, but the most recommended option is to consult a fitness professional or trainer, as they can help create an exercise regimen that gets results without creating unhealthy exercise habits.

Another solution is to make sure that a proper balance is found between exercise and rest; exercising is perfectly fine, as long as you do not take it too far. Setting realistic weight loss or strength goals is the key, and finding a reasonable schedule in which to accomplish them. There is no direct correlation to amount of exercise and amount of weight lost, especially as burning calories is most effectively done with a high metabolism rather than exercising for hours at a time. A combination of strength training and cardio work is also essential to lose weight while also gaining muscle and strengthening metabolism (Shape). Maintaining an essential and healthy diet is also crucial; exercise bulimics will often eat too much and then exercise, while others will try to starve themselves while also over-exercising in order to lose substantial amounts of weight. People who over-exercise must learn to be okay with “ what [their] body can do, rather than attaining a certain weight,” which can lead to an overall healthier attitude toward exercise (Shape). The most important thing to remember is that exercise not only burns calories, but increases one’s metabolism – this is the primary way by which people tend to lose weight. By remembering this fact, over-exercisers can choose to not psychologically connect exercise directly to weight loss; it is merely meant as a means to increase metabolism, and is not the only way to burn fat. Furthermore, moderation will encourage healthy eating habits in

order to fully justify the exercise routines people currently undergo; combining diet and reasonable exercise is the most effective way to lose weight.

In conclusion, over-exercising is a phenomenon which must be curbed through education and a more moderated exercise routine. Because of the stigma against obesity in America, whether through unrealistic standards of beauty or the AMA's warnings of the dangers of being overweight, over-exercising is a very real phenomenon that can have dangerous consequences for those who engage in it. The solution to these problems is to find a moderate approach to exercise and dieting, one which accomplishes fitness goals but does not endanger one's health – this can be done by consulting with fitness experts and learning to recognize dangerous habits and stopping them before they go too far. If this can be done, those with over-exercising problems can be on their way to healthy, productive athletic lives.

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