

Preventing Plateaus

Written by Ian Hart
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A question that comes up often in my field is how to prevent a training plateau. People often get off to a great start on an exercise routine, notice results for a period of time, and then see the results come to a dramatic halt. They feel like they are on the right track and then all of a sudden the number on the scale stays the same, the fat around the mid section, hip and arms remains or looks thicker, motivation begins to decline and the “what am I doing wrong? I did everything I thought I was suppose to do” feeling begins to creep in. This can then lead to the worst possible question, which is "what's the point?" Or, you could learn some simple secrets that will dramatically alter your performance and figure. Now, there are numerous reasons for training plateaus. I could never explain them all in one article, but I will tackle the main issues at hand:

The list of possible plateau problems

1. Wrong meal-plan or lack of knowledge about the meals - not having a balanced diet.
2. Not enough intensity or stress on the body to create change
3. Over-training/ too much intensity too often. Over-training has 4 different stages and can throw off hormones, creating the opposite effect of the one you want – fat retention, severe fatigue, lack of interest in training, etc.

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4. Doing the same thing over and over again (this is linked to number 2 above)
5. Eating too many calories
6. Not eating enough calories
7. Not eating the proper percentages of protein, carbs and fat; A general diet should be roughly 20% protein, 20% fat and 60% carbs, but this will change. See below for more details.
8. Not drinking enough water and consuming too much coffee, diet sodas, alcohol, orange juice and sport drinks
9. Eating too many foods that are high on the glycemic index
10. In-taking too much high fructose corn syrup (which could be labeled as corn sugar nowadays, so be careful!)

As you can see above, what you eat plays a major role in exercise and training plateaus, so I am going to share some secrets about nutrition.

1. Top carb sources: Oats, sweet potatoes, fruits, brown rice, Ezekiel bread
2. Top protein sources: eggs, fish, chicken, lean red meats

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3. Top fat sources: fish oils, omega 3,6,9 fatty acids, cashews, almonds

It is very difficult to burn fat in the presence of carbs because it raises your insulin levels and prevents the chemical process of burning fat from occurring, or at the very least, makes it really hard. At the same time, we need carbs for fuel as it is our body's preferred energy source.

So here is what I want you to do; and remember that this is just one technique for preventing a plateau through your diet (with a goal of burning fat and building lean muscle):

1. The first step is to find out how many calories you should consume per day
2. Make the days that you're training heavy carb days, but also decrease your protein intake and have little to no fat. (60% carbs: 40% protein)
3. On moderate or cardio days, eat less carbs, increase protein and have a little bit of fat. Approximately 35% carbs, 55% proteins and 10% fat
4. On non-training days have about 65% protein, 20% carbs and 15% fat

Obviously it gets a little deeper and more detailed than that, but this information alone is enough to make strides. It's important to understand that your physiology is different when you are training (sport nutrition) and that the diet should match your activities. In order to have the energy to train hard, burn more calories and get results, we need carbs and we also need them to assist the protein in repairing the muscles. Carbs are not the enemy. But too much of the wrong carbs on the wrong days can be.

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