



Avoid Injuries When You Start a Workout Program

By Dr. David Geier

Model Allison Forbes

I generally support any fitness program that motivates people to get in shape. If a group environment and coaches pushing you is what you need to work out every day, I'm generally all for it—whether it's CrossFit, boot camps or almost any fitness program. If group classes and training aren't for you, jogging, weightlifting, cycling or even walking might be appropriate.

It is not uncommon for people new to exercise programs to battle aches and pains early in the training. Occasionally they actually suffer injuries that can set them back for several weeks.

Fortunately, taking a few simple steps can at least minimize your chances of getting hurt when you start lifting weights, CrossFit or any other training program. Here are four tips for avoiding many workout injuries:

Learn correct techniques for every movement.

Many people suffer bone and joint injuries by flailing their arms around or lifting weights off the ground awkwardly.

Using perfect technique for each exercise can help you prevent injuries by limiting stress to areas where it shouldn't be. Plus it will increase results by focusing the stress on the muscles you are trying to build.

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Work with a qualified trainer.

When learning any new program, it is a good idea to work with a fitness trainer. Unfortunately almost anyone can call himself a trainer. Inquire about your trainer's experience. Ask if he or she has obtained qualified certification.

Stop an exercise when you can no longer control the movement.

I'm all for pushing yourself. That's how you grow and how you improve. You have to be able to control your form, though.

You need to be able to safely control the weight. If you lose your form, or if the bar or dumbbell slips, you could get hurt.

Avoid doing too much, too soon.

You shouldn't expect (or try) to run a marathon one month after you start running. That sounds straightforward, but you would be surprised how many people try to run a race that is coming up too soon. Without enough time to slowly increase training, they suffer overuse injuries like stress fractures that can cause them to miss months of training.

Likewise, don't try to lift very heavy weights right away. Pick a lower weight that you know you can control (a trainer can help you pick a starting weight) and perform as many reps as you can. In your workouts in the coming weeks and months, you can increase your weight with each exercise.

Dr. Geier is an orthopaedic surgeon at Sports Medicine Specialists of Charleston and the Medical Director of East Cooper Sports Medicine. For more information on visit www.sportsmedspecialists.com.