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The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Whether your goal is to gain muscle, build endurance, lose weight, or improve your overall health and wellness, chances are you want to lock in a sustainable workout plan. You also want to set yourself up for success with enough challenging sweats and time for your body to recover. Striking that balance may seem tricky, but fitness pros have some clear advice about how often you should work out—and what types of exercise you should focus on when you do. First, you have to figure out your goals, says WH advisor Sohee Carpenter, CSCS, trainer and fitness educator. Three main buckets to consider: general health, weight loss, and building muscle.Meet the experts: Sohee Carpenter, CSCS, is a trainer, fitness educator, and WH advisory board member. Kehinde Anjorin, NCSF, CFSC, is the founder of The Power Method. Rebecca Kennedy, CPT, is the director of strength for Peloton. Natalya Vasquez, CPT, is a certified personal trainer, health coach, and founder of Bridal Bootcamp San Diego. Whether you want to run a record number of miles, get into strength training, lose weight, or just feel healthy all over, there is an optimal number of workout days for you. Spoiler: It's probably fewer days than you think. Rest days are oh so valuable for hitting your goals, too.The US Department of Health recommends at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate physical activity a week, but what you do beyond that really depends on a few key factors (more on that soon!).Intrigued? Keep scrolling for your personalized answer to how often you should exercise (and how to create an effective workout routine) for each major goal. Goodbye confusion, hello results!How often should you work out each week?Your magic number of workout days depends on your goals, and here's a cheat sheet to optimize your schedule:Weight loss: 3-5 days/weekBuilding muscle: 3-5 days/weekGeneral health: 3-6 days/weekIf you're aiming for weight loss you can sustain long-term, three or four days per week gives you enough flexibility that you can stay on track week after week and month after month. In many cases, healthy, sustainable weight loss is best achieved through a combo of exercise and both nutrition and behavior changes."For weight loss, working out three to four times per week is optimal," explains trainer Kehinde Anjorin, NCSF, CFSC, founder of The Power Method. "Long-lasting weight loss has no finish line, so you want to be able to maintain and prioritize this lifestyle to keep your results."But another crucial factor for weight loss is being more active in general—even outside of formal workouts. "Generally, those who maintain higher activity levels (even if not in the form of formal exercise but in other activities such as walking while doing errands) tend to be more successful at maintaining weight loss," Carpenter says. "They burn more calories throughout the day and expend more energy overall."TL;DR: In addition to penciling in workouts, try to make daily routine changes that get you up and moving more. It'll pay off in the long run.Just note that nutrition is equally important to how many days you work out when it comes to weight loss, says Natalya Vasquez, CPT, a certified personal trainer, health coach, and founder of Bridal Bootcamp San Diego. "You can work out all you want, but if you're eating over your body's caloric needs and if the type of foods you're eating are ultra-processed foods instead of nutrient dense whole foods, you may have a more difficult time losing weight and keeping it off," she explains. "Eating nutrient dense whole foods will fuel your body with the nutrients it needs to support feeling good both physically and mentally."Three or four workouts per week is also a great place to start if you want to sculpt some muscle, but how you spend your time during those workouts will be a little different than if you're sweating for overall health or to lose weight, Anjorin says.If your priority numero uno is overall health, you can base your specific workout routine on what you enjoy—and just how much of your free time you want to spend sweating."Generally speaking, I think anywhere between three to six days a week works for most individuals," says Carpenter. "The more sedentary you are in everyday life, the more I recommend doing some form of intentional movement most days." If your job requires long hours at a desk, for example, you'll benefit more from incorporating exercise every day. If you have a more physically demanding job, though, closer to three workouts a week might cut it.And, if you're in race mode and aiming for a marathon or half marathon, check out these comprehensive training guides for running your first or fastest marathon and half marathon.Types Of Exercise To Choose FromCardio: Also known as aerobic exercise, cardio is any activity that increases your heart rate and strengthens your heart and lungs, says Vasquez. "It is so much more than running," she explains. "Cardio can be low impact walking, swimming, a dance class, kickboxing, pickleball, rollerblading, or bootcamp," she adds. The American Heart Association recommends a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of high-intensity cardio per week, ideally spread throughout the week, but cardio should be programmed into your routine in a way that supports your goals, says Vasquez. Strength training: Resistance training helps strengthen your muscles and includes lifting weights, using resistance bands, medicine balls, or weight machines. "If your goal is to put on muscle or lose body fat, then you should strength train three to five times per week for approximately 30 to 60 minutes per session," says Vasquez. "This amount of training will allow you to train multiple muscle groups effectively to ensure a well-balanced training program." This may include an hour-long strength-based workout class or a 30-minute sweat sesh during your lunch break, she adds.Mobility: Mobility refers to the range of motion in your joints and their ability to move freely, and should be incorporated into every training session, says Vasquez. "These exercises can be added into your warmup with your dynamic stretches, and if you're doing resistance training, can also be spread throughout your workout before lifting heavier weight," she explains. Examples include shoulder circles, hip openers, and cat cows.Balance: Balance is being able to control your body during movements and activities, and to keep your body in position while remaining static. "Balance training is oftentimes completely disregarded when it comes to training, but as we become older it's actually more important to our bodies," says Vasquez. Balance exercises can be incorporated into a longer session or done on their own for 10- to 15-minutes a few times a week with moves like single-leg stands, marching in place, and alternating reverse lunges, she adds.What's an effective workout routine? As for how to craft your formal workouts to hit those goals? Let's discuss. Cardio: 2 Days Each Week For Weight Loss, Up To 1 Day Each Week For Building MuscleThough you might think that losing weight requires doing loads and loads of cardio, good news: "Long gone are the days of prescribing excessive cardio for weight loss," says Anjorin. "Incorporating resistance training is more beneficial and effective for weight loss."Incorporate about two days of cardio per week to support your weight loss, Anjorin recommends. From there, add (or subtract!) cardio sessions (running, swimming, HIIT, kettlebell swings, etc.) based on how you feel afterward and your progress. In short, cardio can really be whatever type of aerobic exercise that you like as long as it gets your heart rate up. If you don't enjoy it, you won't stick with it, so finding types of cardio and other exercise you really enjoy is ultimately your golden ticket. Keep in mind that more isn't better, though. "When it comes to weight loss, you want to make your body as efficient as possible by building muscle (and not burning it off)," adds Vasquez.Consider this your invitation to ease up on the cardio workouts for more muscle, too: "I would suggest scaling back on the cardio when muscle building is the goal," says Carpenter.To get your heart pumping and preserve those muscle gains, stick with one HIIT workout, cycling class, or other harder session per week, suggests Rebecca Kennedy, CPT, director of strength for Peloton. "When your goal is to build muscle, cardio should be supplemental and used for general conditioning and endurance," she says. "It should come after strength work and be mostly low-intensity so you can build endurance without cannibalizing the efforts of your strength workouts." In this case, too much intense cardio can impact your muscles' ability to recover from and adapt to strength training, ultimately stunting their growth. Strength Training: 3 Days Each Week For Weight Loss, 3-4 Days Each Week For Building MuscleStrength training is your BFF if you're trying to lose weight, says Anjorin. Her recommendation: Start with three strength training days per week. "Start small using light or moderate weights and build from there," she adds.Then, continue to stress your muscles (and see the greatest benefits) by increasing the amount of weight you use at least every few weeks. Not sure which movements to start with? Try moves such as squats, pushups, and deadlifts, which use multiple large muscle groups and burn more calories, says Anjorin—which ultimately helps lead to weight loss. (Exercises that isolate smaller muscles don't offer as much bang for their buck.)No surprise here: Strength training is *definitely* a must if you want to build that muscle, too, Anjorin says. Ideally, that means three to four strength workouts per week.Compound movements like squats and deadlifts that fire up multiple big muscle groups are still the way to go here. However, progressively lifting more weight and tweaking your nutrition are extra important for building muscle."In order to build muscle, you have to keep progressing your load and challenging your muscles to grow," says Anjorin. (Shoot for a weight you can lift for just about 10 to 12 reps to maximize that potential!) "Increasing protein intake and calories are also often overlooked, but without the appropriate nutrition, it's hard to build any muscle mass," she adds. Make sure to incorporate protein into every meal—especially those you nosh on before and after hitting the weights.Is it bad to work out every day?Short answer: yes. Rest days are just as important as your workout days and you need them on your schedule to hit your goals. Rest: 2 Days Each Week For Weight Loss, 2-4 Days Each Week For Building MuscleYou need to balance work and rest to get the results you want and sustain your routine. That applies to any goal."Rest days can vary from individual to individual, depending on your training schedule and workout intensity, sleep hygiene, and food quality," Anjorin says. That being said, taking two rest days per week generally works well when weight loss is your goal, as it ensures you have the recovery you need to push your body when you do get moving.Of course, though: "Always listen to your body," says Anjorin. If you're feeling tired, there's no reason *not* to take a chill day. Remember, losing and maintaining weight is a marathon, not a sprint.If building muscle is your MO, you may need to take more rest days. "The muscle needs to be stimulated and also have time to recover and then adapt," says Kennedy. "We want to avoid both overtraining and under-training muscles."Depending on how new you are to strength training and how hard you push yourself, Kennedy recommends between two and four days sans weights per week for building muscle. "With too little rest, the body doesn't have the proper time to recover for your next workout," she explains.Again, your body will let you know what to do here. If you feel more tired than usual when ramping up your strength training, give yourself an extra rest day or two so those muscles can bounce back (and grow!).For overall health, mix in both strength and cardio.If you're working out to feel good, don't worry too much about how much cardio versus strength training you do in a given week."As a general rule for the general population, a 50-50 training split is a great starting point," says Anjorin. That means that if you work out four days a week, you'd do two days of strength training and two days of cardio and three rest days. Easy-peasy, right? Bottom line: How often you should work out depends on your lifestyle, fitness level, and individual goals. But ultimately, balancing cardio and strength sessions and recovery is key whether you're working out for overall health, weight loss, or building muscle. ONCE YOU'VE CAUGHT the workout bug, you might find it hard to slow down and take a break. Maybe you're training for a race or another performance goal, or maybe you finally hit your stride when it comes to consistent fitness and don't want to lose that momentum. There are lots of reasons you might be tempted to exercise every. Single. Day. How many days you work out every week should depend on your goals, among other factors. The "no days off" mentality has its consequences, and we're not only talking about missing out on gains you were hoping to make by keeping your foot on the gas. Recovery is necessary for your body and mind. Skipping rest days is not only likely to put you in a world of hurt down the road (literally, you'll up your injury risk without a day off)—after long enough, your all-or-nothing lifestyle could put you at the risk of burning out, too. So, what are you to do when it comes to your training schedule? The solution isn't straightforward, but as long as you keep some guidelines about intensity and active recovery in mind, best practices are fairly simple to follow. Below, learn more on how to find the sweet spot in your fitness frequency without sabotaging yourself in the process. Is Working Out Every Day Safe?While there are some subtleties when it comes to constructing your fitness program, the question of whether planning the same type of dedicated workout every single day is a simple one to answer. "Is it a great idea? No!" says Kurt Ellis, C.S.C.S., owner and coach at Beyond Numbers Performance. "[That's] mainly because you want to provide your body with the rest needed in order to adapt to training." That adaptation is the whole point, according to Ellis, who explained previously that "allowing muscle groups to repair and rebuild after intense workouts is key for growth."Balancing a routine means managing the load you'll take on over a period of time. You need to think about how much good stress—or the level of effort needed to induce changes—you're aiming for without going so hard that you actually do more harm than good, he explains. There are some key indicators that you've found that balance, according to Ellis: You're getting stronger as your workouts progress without nagging ailments and you're excited to train, day in and out. How Much You Should ExerciseGenerally, the minimum amount of exercise you should aim for is 75 minutes of vigorous activity, 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity (walking, biking), or an equivalent combination of the two every week, according to CDC recommended guidelines. The guidelines also recommend that two or more days feature muscle-strengthening activities, like weight training. What's considered moderate or vigorous will be individual to each person. Factors such as your current fitness level, training age (how long you've been exercising), and any pre-existing injuries or conditions can all impact this intensity benchmark, says Ellis. Like all guidelines, you should use these as a starting point. Hitting the exact number, however, is less important than aiming to get as close as you can within your own circumstances and ability. The Pros and Cons of Working Out Every DayPrioritizing movement every day, isn't the worst idea in the world, at least in theory. Maintaining an active lifestyle is an important factor for quality of life and longevity, too. Taking your workout habit to the extreme and training hard every day, however, is a different story. There are factors to consider when you determine what your schedule is going to look like, and how you'll be able to handle the load. Pro: Training Can Boost Your Mood"Some people train daily as a means of relieving stress," says Ellis. There is some science that backs up the idea that exercise can help to manage stress: Regular activity releases feel-good chemicals, or endorphins, as well as distract you from everyday stress and worry, according to the Mayo Clinic. Just five minutes of aerobic exercise may have anti-anxiety effects, per the Anxiety and Depression Association of America.Pro: Consistency Helps to Form Healthy HabitsWhile it can sometimes be difficult to kickstart a fitness routine and actually stick with it, once you find a schedule that works for you, it can be hard to remember a time when you didn't prioritize your workouts. Consistency, no matter what your health or performance goal may be, is the first step in making a routine work for you.Con: You Might Up Your Injury RiskSimply put, the more you exercise, the greater your risk of getting hurt. That's just math. But it's more than that. Working out every day—especially engaging in the same types of workouts that target the same muscle groups—means you're stressing your muscles and joints and not giving them time to rest and recover. Fatigue can lead to sloppy form and overcompensation, which can led to injuries. "Incorporating rest days can help to mitigate injuries," says Ellis. If you push too hard, eventually you might break.Con: You Put Yourself at Risk of OvertrainingDouble the workouts doesn't mean double the results. Working out every day and exercising too hard can cause overtraining, "which leads to chronic [physical] fatigue, mental fatigue, and an overall decrease in performance," says Ellis. What to Consider If You Really Want to Exercise Every DayIn some cases, you might be able to justify having something on your fitness calendar every day. "Depending on the individual, the intensity of their training and the purpose of their training, then it is possible to work out every day," Ellis says. When he says that, however, the key is how you define a "workout."When you think about what you count as a workout, you might imagine that it has to take place in a gym, there's set amount of mileage you're covering on a run or some other set of factors. If you draw a distinction between "activity" and "exercise" and give both value within your training plan, you can expand your calendar. Activity can be routine movement (walking the dog, raking leaves in your yard, taking the stairs at work, etc.), while exercise is likely more prescriptive (going on a run, taking a strength training class). Both have their place, but if your goal is about longevity and "being able train consistently, indefinitely," you'll need to strike a balance between tough workouts, active recovery and true rest days, says Ellis.So, if you want to remain active on most days, keep the following advice in mind.Manage Your Training IntensityThat might look like a weekly fitness routine that includes two high-intensity days, three moderate intensity days, one low-intensity day, and one rest day. Rather than thinking about your low-intensity day as something that needs to take place in a gym, you can slot in a brisk walk or some other activity that still gets you moving without putting as much strain on your body.Don't Skip Warmups or Cooldowns "Proper warm up and cool down protocols can help in mitigating injury by prepping the body for activity and decompressing from activity," says Ellis. Not sure exactly what that might look like? Give this warmup a try before your next training session. When you're finished, run through this cooldown routine. Diversify Your WorkoutsIntroducing variety to your workout plan won't only keep things feeling fresh to prevent boredom—you can can also help to combat fatigue as you toggle between techniques and muscle groups. This won't necessarily be the best path forward if you're training for a specific performance goal or sport. You'll want a periodized plan in that case, which will lead you up to peak performance for your race or PR attempt. But if general health is your main objective, you can try out multiple styles of workouts without sweating the details too much. The end goal, in that case, is quality movement. Take Recovery SeriouslyIf you struggle with taking a day off because you don't want to fall behind, consider looking at your rest and recovery as another essential aspect of your training rather than a day off. Even though you're not taking on the same strain as the days you're performing specific routines, you can still focus on stretching and mobility work, taking time to get massages or other services, or meditating.And remember: Even if you're not moving your body, that doesn't mean that it's not working to continue making adaptations to all the workouts you had put in throughout the rest of your week. Alyssa SparacinoAlyssa Sparacino is an ACE-certified personal trainer, former Shape editorial director, as well as an editor, and writer with a focus on fitness, health, and wellness. Her work has been published online and in print for brands including Shape, Health, Fortune, What to Expect, Men's Journal, Ask Men, Travel & Leisure, Chewy, and more. When she's not writing or lifting weights, you can find her hiking, exploring, and eating with her husband and rescue dog.Reviewed byBrett Williams, NASMBrett Williams, NASM-CPT, PES, a senior editor at Men's Health, is a certified trainer and former pro football player and tech reporter. You can find his work elsewhere at Mashable, Thrillist, and other outlets. One contemplation most people have in the gym is "should they go to the gym more often"? The theory being that the more time and effort they spend training their muscles, the faster they'll grow. For example, switching from a 3 day per week training routine to a 6 day per week training routine MUST mean faster gains... Right? Well, let's find out. But, of course, when it comes to muscle growth, it's not all about training frequency. You also need to select the right exercises AND eat right. That's why I've designed every BWS program to be an all-in-one, science-based process that'll get you to your dream physique FAST. And best of all? It's all rooted in science. For more information: Click the button below to take my analysis quiz to discover the best program for you: ↓ Take The Starting Point Quiz Here! More Lifting Sessions Doesn't Always Equate To More Gains Does working out more frequently lead to more gains? Well, research indicates that it's actually a yes and no kind of answer. But, why? Well, because of findings based on several studies and a meta-analysis on training frequency. These findings indicate that the rate of muscle growth, regardless of how many days you choose to work out, will be similar if you can check off each of the following 3 requirements: You're training each muscle group at least 2 times a week. So for example, if you work out only 2 or 3 times per week, then you're doing full-body workouts. On the other hand, if you work out more often than this, then you're doing some form of muscle grouping split. Basically anything but a bro-split. You're doing enough volume within your workouts. And enough volume throughout the week. You're performing each of your sets with enough effort and intensity to fully stimulate your muscle fibres. And in fact, studies that have actually specifically tested training 3 days per week versus 6 days a week of training have found this to be true when the above three requirements are in place. So accordingly, making that switch from 3 to 6 days per week wouldn't speed up gains provided that you satisfy those three requirements... Right? Well, not necessarily. Why? Well, the complication here lies within requirements 2 and 3. How Many Days Should You Work Out Depends On Your Lifting Experience We know our workout volume requirements slowly begin to increase as we gain more experience. This means that over time, we have to do more sets per workout and throughout the week to continue growing our muscles at the optimal rate. So - how many days a week should you work out if you're a beginner like Charlie below for example? Or an intermediate to advanced lifter like Jeremy? Well, researcher James Krieger did an in-depth analysis of this. He found that for beginners, you don't want to utilize higher volumes right away. So if you're training 3 times a week, for example, you only need around 2-3 sets per muscle per workout. Or around 6-10 sets per muscle per week for maximal growth. But as a beginner progresses into a more trained state throughout the years, Krieger's analysis suggests that those few sets no longer provide enough stimulus. And that to maximize growth, an increase of: 8-10 sets per muscle per workout, or Around 16-20 sets per muscle per week are now needed. And this is what creates the complication. Experienced Lifters May Not Benefit From Adding Extra Sets Per Session The question: "How many days should I work out a week" is easy to answer when you're a beginner. As a beginner, achieving 2-3 sets per muscle group per workout or 8-10 sets per muscle per week can easily be done with just 3 full-body workouts per week. But then, as a more experienced lifter, fitting 8-10 sets per muscle per workout or 16-20 sets per muscle per week into just 3 full-body workouts becomes a challenge. Your workouts will become a lot longer, not to mention often unenjoyable. And it may even compromise growth! Muscles' Force Production Is Adversely Affected By Fatigue Because during a workout, the ability of our muscles to exert force can be negatively affected by two things: The muscle itself getting fatigued from our exercises. This is also known as peripheral fatigue The central nervous system, or CNS fatigue, which is the inability of our central nervous system to activate our muscle in the first place so that it produces force. Both of these types of fatigue contribute to us reaching failure during our sets. But CNS fatigue is more problematic... That's because it actually reduces our ability to fully activate our muscles during a set. In fact, when there's a lot of CNS fatigue, we can actually reach failure in a set of an exercise before we achieve full motor unit recruitment of that muscle. And as you can imagine, this muscle recruitment failure is obviously detrimental to muscle growth. And since we know that CNS fatigue increases over the course of a workout, this means that later sets and exercises in a workout will contain fewer stimulating and productive reps than earlier sets. Which helps explain the exercise order research out there indicating that exercises done early on in a session are more effective for growth. And that adding extra sets to a workout will have progressively smaller and smaller incremental benefits. Really enjoy digging into the research? Then you'll absolutely love working with my team of highly-qualified trainers and nutritionists (plus myself!); in the process of guiding you through the process of achieving your dream physique in the time-efficient way possible, we'll also make sure you understand the science behind it all. Find out more here: Click the button below to find out more about the 3-on-1 coaching program: ↓ Advanced Lifters Need To Distribute Volume Over A Week Suggesting, that as a more advanced lifter, trying to shove in all your volume into 3 full-body workouts per week is likely not the best option. Especially if you're seeking to maximize growth. That's because, as mentioned above, many of the exercises you do towards the end of your workouts won't be as effective. Also, you may not even fully recruit your muscles fibres during those later sets. Meaning that as you gain more experience and your volume requirements increase, it would instead be a good idea to distribute that volume throughout the week by adding in additional training days. And recent research is in support of this. For instance, a 2019 paper analyzed muscle growth in advanced lifters who either: Performed all of their volume with either an upper/lower split 4 times per week Or a full-body session just 3 days per week. And after 10 weeks, the researchers found that the upper/lower split provided slightly greater growth at all measurement sites. While the study did not reach significance, it is highly likely that the observed results would have reached significance had the study been carried out for longer. How Many Days Should You Work Out: Takeaway Bear in mind that further research is definitely needed to clarify this and fully answer this question. But when it comes to the question how many days a week should you work out, I think we can quite confidently provide the general recommendation that: As a beginner - You don't need as much volume to maximize growth. You can effectively do accomplish all your weekly training volume with just 3 training days per week. Provided that those are full-body workouts. When you become a more experienced lifter - As you gain more experience and your workout volume requirements increase, it may then be best to add more training days into your routine. This can be done with an upper/lower split 4 days a week, or push pull legs split 6 days a week, etc. This will help you spread out that increased volume most effectively and avoid running into the problems we discussed earlier. Now, a question you might be asking is how you'd know if you can be considered a beginner to lifting or not. And as covered in my previous article on 'How to bulk up fast,' here's how you can classify yourself: You're a beginner if you're able to progress most training loads in the gym on a weekly basis. You're intermediate or advanced when your progress is only evident over multiple months or years. Workout Volume And Consistency Is Still Most Important Now keep in mind that I've gone through what's optimal to maximize growth. So if you can't commit to higher frequencies as you gain more experience, then it doesn't mean that you're not going to build muscle. Because you will. Also, the difference we're talking about is minimal. At the end of the day, workout volume and consistency is what's most important. Let's say your schedule only allows you to train 3 days per week. But you can hold that up week after week without fail and get enough volume in. Then do that. You shouldn't fixate on the answer to how many days a week should you work out. Ultimately, that's going to be a lot more effective than trying to go 6 days per week but being inconsistent with it. And for a step-by-step program designed to accommodate your schedule and show you exactly how to build muscle most effectively through the use of science, then: Click the button below to take my analysis quiz to discover the best program for you: ↓ Take The Starting Point Quiz Here! I hope you enjoyed this article and have gotten a clear answer to how many days a week should you work out. Now, you won't be at a loss for words when someone asks you, "How many days a week should I work out?" Don't forget to give me a follow and connect with me on Instagram, Facebook, and Youtube as well, in order to stay up to date with my content. By the way, here's the article summed up into a YouTube video: How Many Days A Week Should You Workout? (FASTER GAINS!)