FITNESS NEWS

By Karen Asp

Too Intense?

Pushing yourself until you stop enjoying a cardio workout may be pointless. In a study from *Preventive Medicine*, subjects completed a treadmill test that increased in speed and grade until they became exhausted, while reporting their levels of pleasure. When the participants' bodies switched from expending energy aerobically (with oxygen) to anaerobically (without oxygen), they reported feeling increasingly worse. "Exercisers often are told to select intensities based on a general formula, but these approaches may result in levels that are inappropriate," says Panteleimon Ekkekakis of Iowa State University. "Feeling less pleasant is an indication that the intensity is too high."

Stretching the Truth

Conventional wisdom about stretching may be wrong. Although it can improve flexibility, stretching may not prevent injuries, according to a study in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. "Coaches and trainers encourage stretching before activity, but numerous studies haven't been able to document the benefits," says Julie Gilchrist of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In the meantime, researchers recommend taking proven measures to avoid injury, like warming up by performing the activity at a low intensity.

63%

of dieters reported that they began exercising more after dieting.

—a survey by Porter Novelli

Workout Alertness

A fit body makes a sharp mind, according to a study presented at a Society for Neuroscience meeting. For 20 weeks, one group of monkeys did no exercise, a second group did moderate-intensity exercise five days a week, and a third group did the same exercise but was studied for an additional 12 weeks. Overall, both exercising groups showed increased blood flow to the brain, which may have accounted for their being more alert and learning to do cognitive tests twice as fast as nonexercisers. However, when researchers remeasured blood flow in the third group 12 weeks after ceasing activity, that increase had disappeared. "Exercise does cause changes in brain function," says Judy L. Cameron of the Oregon National Primate Center, adding that monkeys' brains are similar to humans'.

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