

## Importance of Varying Workouts

To understand why it's important to vary your training sessions, it's first necessary to understand how the human body works. The body is designed to adapt to whatever it does the most. In other words, to become efficient at that movement or activity. Over time, we've become very good at specializing – the body changes to make the most of what it's getting, even if that includes sitting in a chair for hours each day. The body doesn't know what is good or bad for it, it just responds to stimulus in the environment. If you sit all day, the body will become good at sitting! If you do push-ups all day, the body will become good at push-ups. This is a very good and necessary adaptation, and something we have to take into account with our daily lives.

It's pretty obvious why becoming good at sitting is not healthy – the body becomes weaker as it is supported by a chair or couch because it does not have to support itself. Some parts stretch out, others tighten up and we end up an unnatural mess! Our posture suffers and we lose movement quality because of it.

What most people don't realize is doing too many push-ups without varying our training can be bad for us as well. If we train one part of the body much more than another, suddenly our bodies become very good at that one thing, and strong in only one way, but are not balanced or healthy. A healthy body is balanced and works together to perform the activities that we want to do. If we just trained our front, and not our back, the strength of our chest will pull our shoulders forward and stretch out our back, because it is not strong enough to combat the chest muscles. This happens with all parts of the body – legs, stomach, neck and arms.

### Balance is Key:

The best way to combat this is to make sure your training is **balanced** – when you work your chest, be sure to work your back. Large movements like squats are balanced by themselves and work most of the core. Too much of any one exercise will lead to dysfunction in another area. For high level athletes who have short careers this can be considered ok, as it is a choice they have made. For most of us who just want to live a long, healthy life, we need balance.

Another aspect of varying workouts is to completely change up what you are doing periodically for the first reason mentioned above – specialization and efficiency. If you run every day, you'll become better at running. At first, the body has to work very hard to adapt to the new activity. Your muscles, ligaments, tendons, and cardiovascular and nervous systems are all working hard to try and do the activity. The more you run, the easier it gets. The easier running becomes on your body, or the more efficient you become, the less energy you have to use, and the fewer calories you'll burn. If weight loss is your goal, burning fewer calories for the same exercise is the opposite of what you want! When you change your exercise program (more reps, harder exercises, less rest, longer sets, etc.) you make your body continually work hard to adapt to new stimuli, and once again make improvements in your fitness.



It's important to note that this can change based on what your goals are, but to be an overall healthy human being, a holistic approach to movement and activity should be employed. Another benefit to adding diversity to your workouts is that it will keep activity **interesting!** We have a wonderful opportunity in Minnesota to change things with the seasons – is it any wonder why Minnesota is ranked in the top few healthiest states in the country year after

year? Swim and bike in the summer, hike and jog to see the fall leaves, snowshoe and ski in the winter, and get back out there in the Spring to enjoy the beautiful weather by walking or starting to bike once again!

