



FitBiz Watercooler Wellness

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GET BACK ON TRACK! – Don't let a few skipped workouts become your new habit this holiday season.

No matter how dedicated you are to exercising, sooner or later, it's going to happen. You're going to skip a workout because your day is packed with meetings, parent-teacher conferences, school events, binge-watching the latest series to drop on Netflix, or soon to be scheduled holiday commitments and celebrations. Suddenly you've skipped the gym for days in a row, but is it really that big of a deal?

While taking a break from time to time can help your nervous system, muscles and connective tissue fully repair from vigorous training, stopping altogether can quickly set your progress back. After just four days of zero aerobic exercise, your heart becomes less efficient, so you may notice shortness of breath sooner. Since muscles generally keep their strength for 7-14 days, you have about one to two weeks of wiggle room before you really start to lose any progress you've made. After that, taking a break will chip away at any improvement you've made and your muscles will begin to get a little lazy. It's the old "use it or lose it" philosophy. Other effects include a drop in blood available for your heart to pump, a decrease in the amount of mitochondria (power plants in our muscles that provide energy), and a loss of capillaries that carry oxygen and nutrients to our cells.

It sounds scary, right, but all is not lost. The good news is that when you resume your normal activity after taking some time off, your fitness levels can return to normal in as little as two weeks. If you know your exercise routine is going to be less than perfect with the holidays approaching, focus on intensity rather than duration or frequency to maintain fitness.

- Cut your usual exercise time by half (or even two thirds), but at the same intensity as your usual workout
- Try a HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) workout consisting of short, intense bursts of activity followed by brief rest periods and are one of the best ways to burn calories, build lean muscle, and boost your metabolism. HIIT workouts deliver amazing results in minimal time, making them perfect for the holiday season.

And if you fall off the wagon completely, don't worry. Even if you are sidelined with an injury for a couple of weeks or other events in your life take you away from your regular routine, your fitness levels should bounce back quickly. The longer you are inactive, the harder it is to get back into shape, so at the very least try to sit less and walk more. The couch is a comfy friend, but not a place to be for too many hours each day!

