

[IMAGE]

## Don't Go Through the Motions

By Editorial Staff

OK, so you're sticking to your exercise program faithfully, day after day, week after week. That's an important step in your quest for lifelong fitness and health. But why aren't you enjoying it like you used to - and why aren't you seeing the results you've grown accustomed to seeing in the mirror? The problem isn't the amount of exercise you're doing (unless you're working out for hours a day, every day, which could mean you need a week off to avoid burnout); the more likely culprit is that you're doing the same routine over and over - expecting the same result. Now that's the definition of *insanity*, and we're not talking about the fitness program that's all the rage these days.

That program, like the one we offer below, is based on *variety* - keeping your body and mind guessing. When muscles can't get used to predictable patterns of exertion, they respond. When your brain can't get used to the "same old, same old" routine, it stays energized and engaged. Here are a few exercise variations that will keep you on your toes:

*1. Push-up potential:* We've all done the standard push-up; hands on the floor, shoulder-width apart; legs straight out behind us. That's effective - but for how long? How about starting with your hands wider, which works more of the outside of the chest? What about raising one foot off the floor for a half-dozen push-up reps and then switching the lift leg? Ever tried moving your hands in toward your chest (which works the triceps muscles more)? Or how about varying the elbow position (pointed out vs. pointed straight back)? Give these push-up variations a try and see how your body responds.

exercise - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *2. Squats times 3:* The squat is another foundational exercise we've all done, but let's mix things up. Assume a squat position and hold for 20 seconds; then repeat. Or try holding the squat with your buttocks touching a wall and a medicine ball in both hands, extended straight out in front of you. Maybe teamwork is more your thing, in which case you could do the above-mentioned medicine-ball wall squats, but toss the ball to a partner and then receive it, all the while maintaining the squat position. Think your body's plateaued? Not for long!

3. *20 on, 20 off*: Jogging around the neighborhood isn't what it used to be, and you can't stand mile after identical mile on the treadmill. OK, so hit the road (or rubber) running (after an appropriate dynamic warm-up, of course, to avoid injury) with a 20-second sprint. Then downgrade to a pace faster than normal for at least 20 seconds, then to your normal pace. After a few minutes, repeat the fastest-faster-normal routine, all the while trying to maintain as much power, balance and proper breathing as possible. It's hard to get bored with a running routine that keeps you on your toes.

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