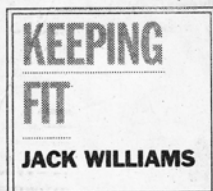


The way to go is very slow with strength training

In bringing his clients up to speed on the principles of strength training, Matt Hedman has some timely advice: slow down. To his way of thinking, an optimal workout shouldn't take longer than 20 minutes. In that time, you can push six body parts to the point of momentary failure with slow, controlled full-range-of-motion movements.

Instead of letting momentum help carry you through the repetitions, you're taking 10 seconds to raise the weight, another 10 to lower it.

"In effect, there's no more 'cheating,' and the muscle fibers must do all the work," Hedman said. "This extra intensity of effort gets the best results."



Think of doing five push-ups at your normal speed. Then try doing the same five push-ups at a pace of 10 seconds up, 10 seconds down. You won't do as many. You won't need to.

Hedman, who opened The Perfect Workout last May in La Jolla, is certified as a master

teacher of SuperSlow, a trademarked method of weight training whose origins date to 1970. That's when engineering guru Arthur Jones founded Nautilus, a revolutionary concept in variable-resistance weight machines.

In the mid-1980s, slow, safe repetitions were used to determine the effects of weight training on women suffering from osteoporosis in research at the University of Florida.

And in 1992, Ken Hutchins wrote "SuperSlow: The Ultimate Exercise Protocol" and founded the SuperSlow Training Guild to promote the philosophy and train instructors. Hedman, who embraced the discipline shortly thereafter, is one of more than 200 certified SuperSlow trainers worldwide.

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No 'piece of cake'

Disdaining conventional wisdom about the number of sets and repetitions required, SuperSlow proponents emphasize intensity and tempo. But Hedman's clients, who pay anywhere from \$38 to \$55 for 30 minutes of one-on-one instruction, usually are more concerned with burning fat than building muscle.

Most wind up doing both, with a little dietary modification.

Among them: Jim Zoll, 53, superintendent of the Julian Union High School District. Since last August, his weight has dropped from 240 pounds to 214. He's added more than a half inch to his biceps and reduced his waist size by more than 3 inches.

And he's doubled his leg strength.

"I thought this was going to be a piece of cake," he said. "A 20-minute workout? I'd been lifting weight for 40 years."

By the time he was 10 minutes into his first SuperSlow workout, Zoll was crying for mercy.

"I thought I was gonna die," he said.

"The challenge is the slowness and the constant resistance. I'm completely exhausted when I'm done."

Instead of doing three sets of up to 12 repetitions, as in his pre-SuperSlow days, Zoll tries to complete five reps without resting.

To help with weight loss, Zoll also bikes and jogs.

Three dress sizes

Another SuperSlow client, a 43-year-old college professor who asked that her name not be published, got hooked on the method when she began taking classes from Hedman in 1998 at a 24 Hour Fitness club.

After Hedman opened his own studio, she continued a program that has seen her lose three dress sizes and quadruple her leg strength.

"I found myself getting stronger on a weekly basis," she said. "For females it's the maximum toning we can get in the least amount of time."

As for fat loss, SuperSlow proponents argue that there's nothing better than high-intensity weight training combined with a moderate reduction in calories.

The research is limited here. But everyone agrees on one thing: The more muscle you have, the more calories your body will burn.

Hedman doesn't record clients' body fat, he said, because he doesn't trust percentages made from skinfold measurements. Instead, he compares before and after skinfold measurements: How many inches you can pinch.

In Zoll's case, he's seen a reduction of 50 percent since August.

"Now I look like I'm 20 again," he said.

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