



FitHapp=ns

Summertime Blues

As we head toward the hot season, and away from the wet season – hoping you did not suffer much damage from the floods we had here in early May – we also approach the slow season. And by slow I mean that time of year when people no longer have to jam their lives in between work and the rush of dropping off and picking up kids. It's also a time when dietary options alter, or even increase, as fresh produce from more local sources becomes available. Summer, compared to the blitzkrieg of the school year – even if you no longer have kids of your own in school – is, especially in the south, a slow time of year. It's also a great time of year to initiate a lifestyle of physical activity. After all, what kind of excuse can you make: too cold? Not enough daylight? Homework? Nice try.

Most people intend to spend more time out of doors, golfing, playing tennis, biking with friends or family, hiking the parks, or even beginning the habit of getting up early to fit in that morning walk you desperately tried to get right after Christmas to lose the holiday weight. As such, you step outside only to be blasted by hot, humid air, and find yourself exhausted by the end of the first turn around the block... and retire to the air conditioned confines of your traditional habits. Fear not, though; most of you won't die from a few minutes in the heat, but precautions should be made in order to avoid "burn -out".

First, hydrate a little more than you might in February. Drink something before you go outside and, if you intend to be out over 30 minutes, unless already acclimated to heat plus activity, take along a small bottle of fluid. Water works, unless you are going to be active for more than 60 minutes.

Second, don't forget sun protection. Although the official SPF guidelines are about to change, think of your protection needs as a function of how quickly you'd burn in the weather you intend to be exercising in. For example, if you typically burn in 15 minutes, and you'll be out for more than 15 minutes, you need a pretty strong SPF lotion. If you don't burn easily, you might get by with a lower SPF. However, to prevent skin damage that will age you, any protection, including clothing, will be useful, and is advised.

Last but not least, salt. Often the bugaboo of hypertensives, don't discount its utility when it comes to retaining fluids while sweating in the heat. If you're a heavy sweater, a little extra salt may go a long way in keeping you on track to initiate your new summer, then lifetime, fitness program. Pretzels are better than most chips, and some data suggests pickles are good (NFL athletes often drink pickle juice). Obviously, if you are on a salt-restricted diet, you should discuss with your doctor before initiating a fitness routine in the outdoors. Of course, you could also just come train at STEPS.



Goodbye, Adios, and Welcome Back

Rarely does any business, other than a professional sports team, see so many key individuals leave at the same time, but this Spring has been a sad one in some ways. STEPS lost three great trainers permanently, and one temporarily, all for reasons other than salary caps. Within 6 weeks, Valerie Bolin, Kiley Green, and Donna Leffel (my left-hand staffer) have departed for greener, if not drier, pastures. Valerie, a Dallas native, decided to return home to continue her musical pursuits. Kiley, who came here last summer after graduating college and proved herself extremely capable and mature beyond her years, went home to San Diego to get her act together prior to entering graduate school next Fall. And Donna, who has helped me do so many things I would grudgingly do for myself, who has been one of the most trustworthy professionals and co-workers a boss can ever have, and who has become a very dear and reliable friend, is moving her husband and daughter to the safer parts of central Mexico for a year; then she'll move to Florida to be closer to her family. Each has left behind a slew of clients who will miss them sorely, who have come to depend on their expertise and their personal touches, and who have come to experience them as friends, not just trainers. Each will be missed by their co-workers, and especially by me. We all wish them well.

In addition to their departures, we had a temporary departure by Sara-Jane Hill earlier this Spring. She worked all the way up to the time the doc told her it was time...to C-section her twin boys. And as only Sarah-Jane could do, she came back and started training clients again within a month. If ever anyone could pull this off, it is she. And her boys, so far, don't seem to mind. Welcome to our world, Levon and Henley.

Finally, after testing Floridian waters, Dee hath returned. Both a massage therapist and a highly-experienced trainer, the marketplace of coastal Florida failed to keep him, so we got him back. And just in time, as several of those clients whose trainers were departing are benefiting from what he has to offer. Welcome back, Dee.

Fitness Fax: the Blog

Last winter I ventured into the world of blogging. Why, I don't know – yes, the Vandy students who created my corporate wellness plan for small business suggested a web presence beyond the STEPS website, but also to share thoughts and ideas, based on news articles and research. Of course, blogs are only good if they're read, and you're invited to check it out: www.DrIrvsFitnessFax. But that's not the point here. The point, as I often tell trainers and clients, is that everything you read in the media, or in the professional literature, is already a year old or older. If you don't keep up, you're already far behind. So when I get a chance to update you on what's going on in the rapidly-shifting world of exercise and fitness, I take advantage of a medium that anyone can access. So check these out (from the American College of Sports Medicine's *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* and the National Strength & Conditioning Association's *Journal of Research*):

Two groups of 10 women did the same periodized resistance training (RT) program for 12 weeks. One group drank a glass of milk immediately and an hour after each session; the other drank an equal-calorie all-carbohydrate beverage (each was flavored so you could not tell the difference). At the end of the study, the milk drinkers not only got stronger upper bodies than the carb drinkers; they lost more body fat. For you women out there concerned about getting bigger, neither group changed total body mass. For that to happen, both groups gained muscle and lost fat – milk drinkers even more so.

Performing upper body exercises on stability balls, such as bench press and overhead press does not increase activation of the target muscles, least of all the rectus abdominus (the belly muscle.)

The metabolic cost of doing super-sets (e.g. biceps-triceps, row-bench press, etc.) exceeds that of traditional resistance training patterns. This means you can lift more time-efficiently *and* get better caloric expenditure by doing multiple sets of opposite muscle groups with little rest, while getting a comparable strength benefit.

Resistance training often leads to a post-session reduction in blood pressure, especially in non-hypertensive people. One study compared the effect of 25 minutes of RT in Type-2 diabetics and non-diabetics and found the former also experienced this *hypotensive* effect. The diabetics, however, had only 90 minutes of this effect compared to 120 minutes for the normotensives.

There is some debate as to whether or not elliptical machines provide similar cardio benefits as treadmills, or cycles. A study compared maximal cardiovascular capacity on all three and determined that the elliptical can yield as strong a benefit as a treadmill. Beware that the digital displays on the ellipticals may understate how hard you're working.

Finally, a study of Tufts University incoming freshman over the past decade found that (1) males averaged over 16% fat and females over 26% fat; (2) those who had excess body fat had already started to present unhealthy cholesterol, triglycerides, and blood sugar data; (3) those who were fit had healthier blood data; and (4) those who were overfat *but fit* also had healthy blood data. The two sided conclusions were: yes, you can be a bit fatter than desired but also be healthy if you stay fit; and that even kids from well-off families who are very bright and have likely had the best opportunities to engage in healthy lifestyles were fatter than would be expected for that age and socioeconomic group. And this portends poorly for our nation's health care burdens.

The Personal part of personal training

Within a 3 week period, STEPS lost two great friends. Col. Dave Richmond, former AF pilot and good friend in politics, humor, and life, has been coming to STEPS for over a dozen years. Last year he suffered a pretty debilitating cardiac event; fighter pilot that he was, he resumed training with Leann as soon as he could. With ever-ready wit and humor, Dave unfailingly made anyone around him feel like they just made a new best friend. Dave died in the wee hours of the morning May 31, survived by his wife and two adult kids.

Then, on Tuesday, June 15, Scott Clayton, a man I refer to as my *great-uncle*, passed away at age 82. Another dozen-yearer, Scott was to me like Peter Falk's Columbo character: he'd finish his workout, shower, and then come over to me and ask for a moment of my time. Like the caring and loving relative, Scott would offer kind but firm words of advice on business and even personal – e.g. future planning - matters (he was, after all, an insurance man). Always apologetic in his approach – hence, Columbo – he was never anything but thoughtful and supportive. Survived by his wife of 60 years and his daughter, Beth, whom he turned into a STEPS client, too, Scott's ever-upbeat spirit and attitude will be missed.

To both our friends and their families, from me and all their other friends here at STEPS, we'll miss you.