

LATINA

Five Exercises You're Doing Wrong and How to Fix Them

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We've all heard the term "No pain, no gain," but when is that pain actually a sign that you're doing an exercise totally wrong? "Good post-workout soreness usually happens in your muscles 24-48 hours after a workout while bad soreness is pain or swelling in your joints," says **Stacy Berman**, a personal trainer and founder of Stacy's Boot Camp.

If you think you're doing yourself a favor by cutting corners with those push-ups, then newsflash: not only are you cheating yourself out of a great workout, but you're also putting your body at risk for injuries. "If you are doing an exercise correctly you should never feel joint strain and only feel the muscles that you are trying to work," Berman points out. So take the time to develop proper form now before bad habits become ingrained—they are much harder to break years down the line.

Here, Berman shares five exercises you could be doing wrong and how to whip yourself back into perfect form!

Sit-ups

Many people lock their hands behind their head and strain their neck while sitting up, which ultimately leads to neck and back pain.



Do it Right: "For a safe and effective stomach workout, you should do abdominal crunches instead of sit-ups," Berman says. "Lie on your back and position your legs with your feet on the floor and your knees bent. Then, with your hands either behind your head or crossed over your chest, lift your entire torso from the belly button up to a 45-degree angle. Keep your spine aligned and your back flat against the floor."

Squats

People overdo it when it comes to weight, which can lead to injury, Berman says. "Doing a squat exercise with a barbell across your back puts you in a position to lift a great amount of weight. Many are prone to add too much too soon, causing them to default into improper position just to lift it," she adds.

Do it Right: Start with a low weight and really focus on your form. Stand straight with a plain (no weight added) barbell across the back of your shoulders and your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. Lower your body down as if you are going to sit in a chair. Keep your knees in a straight line as you lower and stop when your thighs create a 90-degree angle with your lower legs. Don't let your knees buckle and make sure your toes are in sight so you know you're sitting deep enough into the squat.



Shoulder Press

This exercise can easily cause strain in the shoulders and joints, not to mention that working the muscles on the top of your shoulders too hard can lead to inflammation.

Do it Right: By keeping your spine in line with your shoulders and head, you can avoid potential pain and injury in your shoulders and spine, says Berman. Use moderate weight while you're still developing proper form. "And avoid the common 'thrust up' that you may see many weight lifters using at the gym," Berman suggests. "This may create a lot of force on the way up, making the exercise easier, but it's very dangerous if you're not in control of the weight you're lifting."

Push-ups

Push-ups are often the cause of neck, lower back, elbow and shoulder pain when done incorrectly.

Do it Right: Start with modified push-ups on your knees in the proper form, which means placing your hands shoulder-width apart and lowering your body until your chest nearly touches the floor, keeping your head, neck and back aligned. "Once you are comfortable doing modified push-ups, start adding just a few 'regular' ones into your routine until you are strong enough to completely replace the modified ones," Berman says.

Pull-Ups

The most common mistake, Berman notes, is locking your elbows when you are lowering yourself from the bar. "Pull-ups are a combination of raw strength and momentum. Being in control is a top priority because if you are swinging up and down on the bar, you will strain your arms, neck and back in the process."

Do it Right: Using an assisted pull-up machine at the gym will help you reach your goal while keeping proper form. "Position your hands a little wider than shoulder width apart," she starts. "Curl your hands under the bar with your fingers facing you and lower yourself slowly until your arms are almost completely extended, but not locked at the elbows. Pull yourself back up in the same controlled motion."