



Overtraining

The term overtraining is complicated. Magazines like “Runners World” love to sell the “less is more” idea of training. Well, less is usually not more. Most of the time the athlete that trains the most wins. That is one of the beautiful things about endurance sports – the more you put into the sport, the more you get out of the sport.

I do not even like the term overtraining, because really, that’s what training is all about. You stress the system by pushing your body, then recover and then repeat.

That said, I want to give you a few tips on avoiding “overtraining”. Stress comes from all areas of life. Even the things we love to do can be stressful. Work, family, social life and training are all stressors. So the things that stress our system need to be accounted for and managed.

There are many ways to determine if you are over trained. I will talk about the one that I like best:

- This method is based off of heart rate (HR). In the morning after your alarm clock goes off take your HR while still lying down. It is important that you do not sit up in bed. You should turn off the alarm clock and relax for a moment (hopefully you do not fall back to sleep). The goal is to relax and get a true resting HR.
- Next, stand up and take your HR again. Simply stand next to your bed without walking around.

So now you have two HR’s: lying down and standing. Now, compare the two HR’s and calculate the difference. This is a test that you will need to perform consistently to find your normal spread between the two HR’s.

A typical spread might be 5 beats higher when standing, but that varies from person to person. The key is to find YOUR normal spread and watch for changes. If the number increases and stays that way for several days, you should back off of your training a little. Backing off of training does not mean to stop working out, but to decrease intensity or duration or both. If you are in the middle of hard training your body will respond better to



“active recovery” than complete rest. Active recovery can be any form of exercise that you enjoy and you feel better after completing.

Overtraining is not something that happens because of one training session. True overtraining takes weeks and is not that common. The nature of training is that some days you will feel beat up and in need of a recovery workout.

So, use your HR to give you a real measure of your training status.