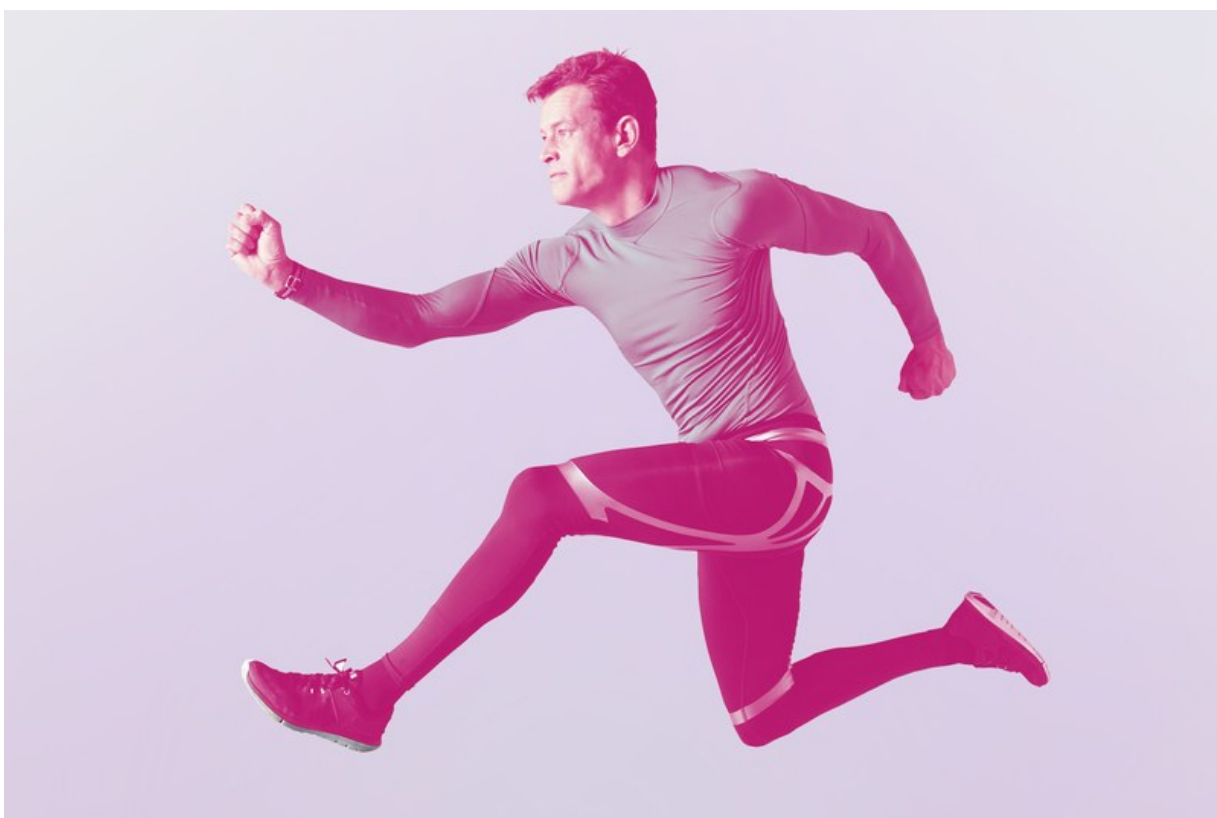




How Many Days a Month Should You Work Out? We Have the Answer



It's probably more than you think

Maybe you're new to the whole fitness game. Or maybe you've been working out for what seems like an eternity, and aren't seeing results. Either way, you're likely to ask yourself: Um, how long do I need to do this before I can detect the presence of an ab?

This is a reasonable question, especially in a world of scammy get-fit-quick programs. But much like Rome, your belly wasn't built in a day. It took years of

neglect and cartons of Nutter Butters. And because we love you, we are going to tell you the truth: It takes some time to come off, too.

As P90X founder and preposterously shredded 57-year-old Tony Horton puts it: "I don't know why we bother with 12 years of grade school, and then college, and we're fine with how long that shit takes, but we can't lose weight in two months, so we quit. If you quit first grade, you're going to end up in a van down by the river."

So have some patience. And while you're waiting, work your ass off.

Horton says says 22 days a month is the absolute minimum you should be working out—and 25 days is an ideal goal. Of course, that presumes you're putting in real effort those 25 visits. "If you're at the gym, that doesn't mean you're working out. That just means your physical body is at the gym. People think if they just go through the motions of something, that it's going to bring the results," says Barry's Bootcamp trainer Noah Neiman. "Consistent, intense effort and dedication—that's what separates the people you see at the gym that have those bodies that you really want and those people that go to the gym and put in the time and never see the results."

And if you're putting in those 22 days a month, and you're going hard, and you're *still* not seeing results, we have a hack for that, too: Make your very first exercise the one you dislike most. If you hate running, hit the treadmill before you do anything else. If you dread the hamstring machine, knock it out and get it over with. "It's going to change your body, because that's the one thing your body's not used to doing," says Alonzo Wilson, founder and director of training at New York's Tone House. "It has no choice but to change—and it only changes when you make it change."

So if you're jogging three miles for 22 straight days, you're going to get to a point where that's no longer such a challenge. Swim one day instead. If you've been doing sets of 20 push-ups for eight months, it's probably time to shoot for

25—or try a deadlift. "If you do everything you're good at, your body just gets accustomed," Wilson says "You reach a plateau."

This doesn't mean stop the exercises you're good at it. Just mix in some new ones to keep your body sharp (and also very, very sore). And when you do make it back to your strengths, track your progress, and make sure you're increasing the difficulty of those familiar exercises.

"Doing your 'best' changes," Horton reminds us. "It changes from day to day, workout to workout, month to month."