

## When to cheat at the gym

Written by Brianna Larson

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There are some things that will inevitably happen during your lifetime: sickness and potential injury are two of them. It can be disappointing when you have started a fitness routine and then you fall victim to the effects of a runny nose, fever and fatigue. When you're feeling under the weather, sometimes working out will do more harm than good. When is it acceptable to cheat on your fitness routine with a bowl of chicken noodle soup?

Are your symptoms above your neck? Think: Sneezing, runny nose, scratchy throat

This is most likely the common cold, although you would want to be diagnosed by a physician. If it is a small cold, go ahead and lace up your sneakers. Light activity can help you recover faster. An Appalachian State study found that people who performed moderate-intensity exercises—like walking—while they had a cold slashed their sick times by as much as half compared to those that didn't exercise.

A major caveat: Don't go overboard. Vigorous exercise—like running, high-intensity interval training, lap swimming, or cycling— can actually suppress your immune system, making you more ill. Decrease the intensity and length of your workout to play it safe.

When you hit the gym, or see your trainer remember that you will be in contact with other people, and no one wants your cold! Be mindful of your germs. Make sure to thoroughly wipe down equipment with antiseptic spray after you use it, visit the gym during non-peak hours, and bring your own sweat towel.

Are your symptoms below the neck? Think: Hacking cough, chest congestion, muscle aches, chills, upset stomach

If you have these symptoms, take some time off from working out. You can't sweat your way back to health. You can do more harm than good if you have this type of infection. You may prolong the illness or make it worse. You'll recover faster if you rest.

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No matter what, skip the gym totally, if you have a fever. Exercising with a high temperature makes you more susceptible to dehydration and can even increase your risk of heart failure. Exercise caution—not your muscles—when your temperature reaches 101.4 degrees and above.

Above all else, listen to your body. The rules of working out while sick aren't written in black and white. If you try to exercise while you are sick, you may feel discouraged that you cannot perform at the level of intensity or strength as you can when you're well. Rest is essential to increased performance and healing, regardless of if you are ill or not.

If you feel fatigued and knocked down, put your feet up and wait until the symptoms—regardless if they're above- or below-the-neck—wane. The gym will still be waiting for you when you're back on your feet.

**Brianna Larson BS, ACSM-, HFS is a Personal Trainer at Fitness Lady in Bossier City. Contact her at [l Larson.bri@gmail.com](mailto:l Larson.bri@gmail.com) and find her on facebook at Flexible Billie Goat.**