

5 Reasons to Skip Your Workout

By Lucy Danziger and the staff at SELF

Sometimes a good sweat session is just what the doctor ordered: Exercise has been shown to help ease menstrual cramps, joint pain, headaches, stress and depression, for starters. But if you're not feeling up to your workout, your body might be trying to tell you that it needs a break. Here are five science-backed reasons to throw in the towel (for today).



Something hurts

There's the good, normal kind of postworkout pain—the achy soreness you feel for a day or two after you've pushed your muscles a little harder than usual or tried something new—and the bad kind that feels like more of an ouch and lingers, explains SELF contributing expert Lisa Callahan, M.D., codirector of the Women's Sports Medicine Center at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City. If a pain persists longer than 72 hours, causes swelling at the site, keeps you up at night or hurts more when you exercise, it's time to sit on the sidelines and call your doc.

You're sleep-deprived

Insufficient zzz's could be as devastating to your well-being as lack of exercise, says James B. Maas, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. "Your body uses sleep to restore itself both physically and mentally, yet people continue to put it off as if it's optional," says Maas. If you've been falling short of the seven to eight hours of nightly shut-eye experts recommend and feel downright exhausted when your alarm goes off in the morning, hit snooze and leave your workout for another day. Bonus: The extra rest will give you more energy to punch through that last mile or set of reps when you do hit the gym again.

You feel dizzy, thirsty or clammy

These are signs of warm weather injuries like heatstroke and exhaustion, cases of which are up 133 percent in the past decade, a study in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine warns. Heatstroke can happen even on mild days, so always keep water handy, and if you start to feel the above symptoms, rest, drink up and call it quits for the day. Better safe than sorry!

Your stomach's been feeling queasy

A little bit of indigestion is no biggie, but if you're throwing up or experiencing severe diarrhea, you're already on your way to dehydration and exercise will only make it worse. A 12-hour bug causes most upset stomachs, so you should be fine after a day in bed (or in the bathroom). Just be sure to drink plenty of clear fluids in the meantime.

You have a fever

If the thermometer reads above 100 and you feel exhausted or achy all over, you could have the flu, so trade your gym clothes for your PJ's and get thee to bed! You'll likely be too zonked to work up a non-fever-induced sweat anyway. Plus, you're contagious a full day before you have any symptoms and for the first few days after symptoms strike, and I'm betting your fellow gymgoers don't want the flu any more than you do. So rest up, drink plenty of fluids and don't even think about those sneakers until your fever breaks and you're feeling normal again.