

13 Rules For Pain & Injury Free Training

By Keith Scott

1. **LEARN to listen to your body!** Being intuitive to what your body is telling you is not easy, but if you take the time to really “listen” you will be able to master it and know when to back off, ramp up, or modify. The obvious sign is pain....if it hurts, stop doing it! But the more subtle forms of pain and dysfunction are harder to notice at first. Here are a few pointers:
 - Always take note of how you feel the day **after** you train. Are you overly drained? In pain? Overly sore? Just not feeling good or normal for within the 12-24 hour time period after your training session? I’m not talking about DOMS, rather feeling “off” and just not normal. If so, take time to evaluate what you did, and figure out what may have done wrong.
 - Take note of how long it takes you to rebound and feel good again. You should feel good the next day. Even if you are extremely sore, you should still generally feel good.
 - If it hurts to do normal, everyday tasks the next day, you probably did something wrong, and have a slight problem. Figure it out, change something or just back off until you figure it out.
 - If you do have pain, what kind of pain is it? Joint pain, muscle pain, nerve pain?
2. **Modify the program** when necessary. I get a ton of questions, as does Jay, about what to do with your program when you have an issue. Don’t be afraid to modify things if you need to do so. If straight bar benching is killing your shoulders, try using dumbbells. If you just can’t seem to bench anything, try pushups. In other words, always try to modify the movement and sub another similar movement when necessary. Sometimes a modification is simply **NOT DOING IT**. Not what anyone wants to hear, but sometimes

you just need to skip the lift or exercise that is causing the most trouble.

3. **Modify movements** when necessary. If an overhand grip hurts your forearms, try a neutral grip. If squatting is bothering your knees, try a wider stance for a day to take some stress off of the knees. Forward lunging might cause some knee pain...try reverse lunges instead. Experiment, and if you don't have any ideas, just ask!

I am not telling anyone to change a movement so drastically that it becomes something else, just don't be afraid to try different techniques of doing something to take the stress down a notch. Getting better at modifying when you are injured or in pain will help keep you in the program instead of doing nothing and feeling helpless.

4. **Heat before, ice after.** I have covered this before, but the general rule with ice and heat is to use heat before you train and always use cold or ice after your training. 20 minutes for each. Forms of heat that can help loosen you up and get the blood flowing: Hot packs, hot tub, hot shower, etc.. Cold; ice pack, ice massage, ice bath (bucket, tub), cold shower.
5. **Soft Tissue work EVERYDAY!!** If you don't have a foam roller or access to one, get one today. Foam roll every day.
 - Use LAX and tennis balls on your forearms, calves, feet, upper back, hamstrings, triceps, etc... Use foam rollers on glutes, quads, calves, lower back, hip flexors, etc... Roll after each workout and even before if that works for you. If you don't have the time when you are in the gym, do it at night before you go to bed. Whatever you do, **don't skip this**. It will change your life physically. Soft tissue work is one of the most important things you can do.
6. **Activate** the shoulder and hip muscles and muscle groups – For shoulder health, activate your scapular muscle groups (i.e. wall slides, scap pushups, band pull aparts, etc...) For hips, activate your glutes (Large and small) (i.e. glute bridges, weighted hip thrusts, band walks, clam shells, etc...) Activation is essential for shoulder and hip health.

7. **Mobilize** your ankles, hips and thoracic spine. Work on these areas at least every week. If you do so, everything else will fall into place.
8. **“Core” muscular endurance** is important for lower back health. Don’t worry about pure strength for your lower back. That will be taken care of from squats and deads. However, work on the endurance for the core. It is much more important for health than anything else. Plank variations, Turkish Getups, GHR holds, etc...
9. Focus on **stretching** your hip flexors, chest, and wrists a few times every week.
10. **Drink a ton of water** every day, avoid inflammatory foods and look into taking systemic enzymes. Might not seem like a big deal, but inflammation leads to pain.
11. **Program** active recovery days into your life. Recovery days can be a day of soft tissue work, stretching, long morning walks, etc... Just make sure you program them into your life. Too many people go balls out every single day and never think about a day of active recovery. This does not mean lying on your couch all day. Make sure you move.
12. **Don’t be stupid!** What I mean by this, is always stop and think first before doing something you know might get you injured. If the program calls for a systematic progression and your feeling like a bad ass today so you decide to jump up 50 pounds because you are trying to be “that guy” in the gym...stop and think. Who really gives a fuck? Why risk it? I’ve been that guy and I always regret it later when I am so banged up that I can’t lift for 2 weeks. Just because I wanted to be the strongest guy around that day.
13. **Use sleeves** on elbows and knees if you have a history of injuries. Knee and elbow sleeves will keep the joints warm which is important but they can also help the increase the proprioceptive functions of the joints, muscles, and brain. Basically, what this means is that these areas will “communicate” better with one another and that can mean better function and less injuries. If you have been otherwise healthy in these areas, you don’t necessarily need to use them.