



## Rich Chaykin on Stress Recovery

**W**hat are you suffering from when you feel fatigue, muscular or joint soreness, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, a decrease in performance, frequent illnesses, irritability, depression, and loss of appetite... yet you have an increased drive to exercise?

Many will tell you that this comes from *overtraining*. But is that the correct answer? Perhaps, but there is another condition that will give you the same symptoms as overtraining; sleep deprivation due to stress. It is interesting that these two problems are so closely aligned; yet, most of us don't really think of a lack of sleep as something that could affect us in this way.

Recognize that the body is a finely tuned machine and one that absolutely needs a certain amount of sleep. The normal for most people is seven to eight hours; but when we are under stress from either physical or emotional issues, then the amount should be increased to around nine.

Why is sleep so important? Well, sleeping is when the body does its repair jobs.

Sleep deprivation has a very disrupting effect on the body's regulatory systems, and the parts that are usually the most affected are the immune and metabolic systems.

There are some interesting effects of stress-related sleep deprivation, and among them is weight gain. It may be hard to imagine, but when some people are under stress they eat more, so they gain more.

When under stress, there is this fight-or-flight sensation, which can result in a stoppage, or it can drive you to do more exercise... which, surprising, is accompanied by decreased energy. For, sleep deprivation and stress sets off a release of a chemical called *cortisol*, which creates negative reactions in the body. Because, increases in this hormone will interfere with the body's ability to recover and repair; and continual release of this hormone could lead to injuries.

Conversely, when the body is rested it releases a chemical called *testosterone*, which is the body's recovery tool. This hormone rebuilds your tissues. And specific types of body movements send out *testosterone* to promote recovery and healing.

Sleep deprivation also has another effect in the body, which is known to most people that exercise for periods of longer than 90 minutes. At the University of Chicago Medical School, Professor Eve Van Cauter, Ph.D., found that glucose levels were abnormal in males between the ages of 18 and 27 whenever they were only allowed only four hours of sleep. And since the body runs off of glucose; when these levels are altered it can dramatically alter body functions. Remember that the brain uses glucose as its fuel supply. So, decreases in glucose will alter the thought processes.

And increased levels of the hormone cortisol also has more adverse effects, for this hormone creates problems with memory and it makes the body more insulin resistant, and this creates problems for the muscles. In addition, it also decreases the release of human growth hormone, which is another one of the chemicals that help with body repair... for the more one has of it, the better the body repairs itself.

Another common misunderstanding is that the body is actually improved by activity, but this isn't necessarily so. For, when the body is working at an activity (such as biking), the muscles are being damaged. And it's only during rest that it has time to repair, rebuild, and adapt to this activity. So, pushing oneself day after day doesn't allow any time for recovery, and this is where a decrease in performance starts.

There are two stages to recovery. There is the immediate recovery phase (that many ignore), where the body just needs to cool down. Yet, how many times does a bike ride end with a massive push towards the very end? And what happens next? You just stop and get off the bike. Unfortunately, however, the body doesn't just shut off at that point... it keeps going! What we need is a cool-down phase where the intensity of that activity is greatly reduced. This gives the body a chance to get rid of the muscle's waste byproducts.

## Stress ...

And what we do the next day is also important in the recovery process, for it's best to do the same activity, but at a much-reduced level. Other activities that are good for off days are walking, yoga, or stretching.

Another aspect of recovery is making sure that we refuel with both carbohydrates and protein. It's thought that this is best done within a half hour or so after the activity. The best ratio of these is considered to be a 4 to 1 ratio of carbohydrates to protein. And of course, it should be a high-quality protein, because that's what is needed to restore the damage created in the muscle cells.

Another way to recover is just to take some time off, for a break from riding is a way of allowing the body and the mind to recharge. However, that doesn't mean just sitting around. Rather, get involved in some other activity... there is plenty to choose from. But work on the body in ways that are going to strengthen it. Do things that help you to relax and regain focus.

In spite of what was recently written in the magazine section of The New York Times, activities such as yoga or Pilates are good, for they work on the whole body by applying resistance. But remember that when you're doing any exercise or program; stay within your limits! Don't get forced into doing something that's beyond your limitations.

I prefer strength training as a way to improve those areas that are injured, since it builds those other areas that you don't use while riding.

There's also something else that can help you, which doesn't take much effort but can pay off in big results... keep an exercise log! Always record how you're feeling, whether you're riding, doing another form of exercise, or just taking a day off. It's amazing how much you can learn by paying attention to what your body is telling you. When your body is telling you it's tired; honor that and don't force it into something that it's not ready to do.

If you have any questions about this article, please feel free to contact me at richardchaykin@yahoo.com. Also, remember to check with your doctor before embarking on any new exercise program to make sure that you are capable of handling it. - *Rich*



## New Members

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Lindi	Moreau	Sam	Scaturro
Jack	North	Debbie	Scaturro
James	Ross	Donald	Riekert
James	Christie	Edward	Gries
Don	Moreau	Richard	Hyer
Peter	Morris	Bill	Haley
Jack	Wolf	Jamie	Schulte
Mike	Lasche	Sharon	Wallace
Jim	Hunder	Steve	Wallace
Clint	Dulin	John	Curtis
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