

Friday the 13th and Other Scary Things at the Gym

Inspired by the hit movie series, Friday the 13th is often considered a really scary day. Here are a few things often seen at the gym that are equally scary and should be avoided.

Crunches and sit ups – Still a favorite for many but these exercises can be really bad for your posture - there are about a zillion other exercises you can do to strengthen your core that are both safer and more effective.



Slumping on the handrails – If you are going so fast on the treadmill that you need to hold yourself up with the handrails, then you're going too fast. Slow down and get your core to support you while your legs do the work to keep you moving.

Fast or jerky movements – Unless you have a workout program specifically designed for speed training, each repetition done with free weights or resistance training machines should be done through the full range of motion in a smooth and controlled manner.

Cardio machines and the 'fat burning zone' – Why would you spend an hour on the elliptical when you could spend less than half that time doing interval training and burn just as many calories? Unless you are training for a marathon or triathlon, there is no reason for your cardio training to take forever.

Generic Workout Programs - While it's always fun to try new exercises, that workout you got from the fitness magazine was not designed specifically for you and could therefore do you more harm than good. If it does not take into account your specific goals, how your body works, where your muscle imbalances lie, your past injuries, your workout history, or any biomechanical deficiencies you may have, then you are risking injury by following it.

The scale (and the people who weigh themselves before and after each workout) - Do you REALLY think you lost a significant amount of fat or gained a significant amount of muscle in the last hour? The scale does not measure your health so stop using it so obsessively.

Yes, the gym can be scary, complicated, and even dangerous if you don't know what you are doing. Hire a certified trainer (if even for one session!) to show you the ropes and help you get the most out of your workout time. Just avoid any trainer that wears a mask and carries a chainsaw.

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