

Sudden loss of weight results in a sudden loss of strength

CHICAGO IRON

by Bob Gajda and Terry Strand



don't get their muscles out of a bottle, if you know what I mean.

BOB: Terry, *nobody* knows what you mean.

TERRY: I'm just sayin'...

BOB: Forget it.

TERRY: O.K., I concur that you may notice a bit of strength loss if you are used to keeping track of how much weight you are able to use on each exercise. We hear this complaint a lot in training some clients. And it's not only the men who are overly concerned that they *can't* push maximum poundages while on a diet. Er, I mean a 'healthy eating lifestyle system'. Sorry.

BOB: You're forgiven. But it's not really about how much weight you push, or about always trying to go heavier. Your progress toward your goal has much more to do with the effectiveness of your overall workout routine. We've even seen the sign that hangs in some *gyms* to misinform their clients. The sign reads, "Go Heavy, Or Go Home". Not true, and not necessarily a good training approach.

Q: My left shoulder has bothered me for several months after my workouts. It's to the point now where I can't do any bench presses on my favorite weight machine because it just hurts too much. Maybe I should just work through the pain? - Gina

TERRY: Yeah, and maybe you should try spitting into the wind, too.

BOB: Either way, it's a bad idea. Never try pushing through a joint pain in the misplaced hope that you can make it better. The first thing to do, Gina, is give the shoulder a complete rest for a week, maybe concentrate on another body part, add a little more cardio, or do whatever you can to take the shoulder out of the workout equation.

You mentioned that machine bench presses are aggravating your injury. It's not surprising since almost all machines force your joints through a predetermined arc of travel. In other words, you don't get a chance to move through your individually determined anatomically advantageous pathway from the beginning of the repetition to the end. And many times the groove that the machine designer chooses to incorporate into a particular piece of equipment is not the right groove for you.

TERRY: That's groovy, Bob,
BOB: Pipe down!

"Go Heavy, Or Go Home" NOT!

TERRY: I'd suggest ditching the machine and going back to raw iron. In other words try using dumbbells for benches. They allow your wrists, elbows and [most importantly for your injury] to assume the correct position for your particular body architecture. Do four or five sets of a dozen or so reps, but keep the weight very, very light for a few weeks. And by light, I mean

using a fraction of what you might normally try to push.

If you ask most gym veterans who've done that and been there, they'll tell you how wretched some of the machines feel on their anatomy. I can barely use a seated press machine because of the way it positions my body. It makes my shoulders hurt like crazy. But with dumbbells I can work my delts like a house afire because I can slightly adjust the angle at which I press 'em.

BOB: Absolutely. Just a few degrees of freedom on the angle of a repetition is often the difference between a damaging, painful rep, and a therapeutic, effective one.

Q: How do I pick a personal trainer? And do I really need one? - Jane.

BOB: Personal trainers come in all persuasions and with many varying styles generally dictated by their backgrounds. There are what I call 'drill sergeant' trainers who scream to motivate you, and there are 'professorial' trainers who guide you more like a beneficent coach. Some have extensive academic backgrounds and others are fresh out of a weekend certification workshop with the ink still wet on their certificates. Personal training certification is ridiculously easy to get, sort of like getting a realtor's license. It's necessary for a trainer to possess one to get onboard at a gym, but it doesn't mean he know anything.

TERRY: Yeah, last week this guy at the gym was a towel boy and now all of a sudden he's a 'certified personal trainer'! I think he got his card out of a box of Cracker Jacks.

BOB: Regardless of a trainer's credentials, make sure you connect with him or her in a way that will insure your progress. Did he ask you your goals? Can he take you where you are move you along safely yet effectively to where you need to get to? I'd look for someone passionate about helping you, combined with a deep knowledge of how to do that. It takes years to become an experienced trainer, so quiz your prospective candidate on his background. A good trainer will not be offended by your queries.

TERRY: Learning to work out is like anything else in life. And you probably don't need to book twenty personal training sessions. It's sort of like going out and buying golf clubs or a grand piano. You *can* hack away trying to learn to play on your own, or you can get a book, or you can hire a pro. You'll get a lot farther, and spin your wheels a lot less with professional guidance.

BOB: Couldn't have said it better myself, Ter.

TERRY: No, Bob, I dare say you couldn't do!

Bob Gajda is a nationally recognized sports rehabilitation expert and Mr. Universe. Terry Strand is the other guy.

Q. As one of my New Year's resolutions I'm planning to renew my gym membership again and combine it with a healthy diet to lose about 35 pounds that I've picked up in the last year. When I trimmed down previously I was upset that I wasn't as strong as before. What can I do to prevent getting weaker? - Allen

TERRY: Well, Allen, would you just quit staring at the numbers on the machines in your gym. There's got to be something better to stare at.

BOB: Seriously though, a slight loss of strength on the machines or with the weights, at least for a while, is not a big deal. It's a fairly normal phenomenon, especially in the beginning. I'm trusting that your diet is medically sound, and that you've been cleared to embark upon an exercise program.

TERRY: Yeah, Al, forget about those crash diets. No anabolic steroids, either. Real men