



## Slow Burn Fitness for boomers

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I read a timely article in the *New York Times* yesterday about how baby boomers are showing up in emergency rooms in record numbers for fractures, dislocations, sprains, strains, and all kinds of other trauma thanks to their efforts to get in shape and delay the aging process. Orthopedic surgeons are doing a land office business replacing knees, hips, and a host of other parts on amateur jocks who are getting up in years.

**"Boomers are the first generation that grew up exercising, and the first that expects, indeed demands, that they be able to exercise into their 70's," said Dr. Nicholas A. DiNubile, a Philadelphia-area orthopedic surgeon, who coined and trademarked the term boomeritis.**

**"But evolution doesn't work that quick. Physically, you can't necessarily do at 50 what you did at 25. We've worn out the warranty on some body parts. That's why so many boomers are breaking down. It ought to be called Generation Ouch."**

**Led by baby boomers, loosely defined as the 78 million Americans born from 1946 to 1964, sports injuries have become the No. 2 reason for visits to a doctor's office nationwide, behind the common cold, according to a 2003 survey by National Ambulatory Medical Care.**

**A Bureau of Labor Statistics study said infirmities associated with the athletic activities of middle-aged adults were the source of 488 million days of restricted work in 2002. When the Consumer Product Safety Commission examined emergency-room visits in 1998, it discovered that sports-related injuries to baby boomers had risen by 33 percent since 1991 and amounted to \$18.7 billion in medical costs.**

It appears from these statistics that you can't have it all. You can't stay in shape and keep your body from wearing out after you've put a few years on it, or so it seems. If you try to take it easy to spare your joints, you end up with a spare tire around your middle. What a choice to have to make.

But we really don't have to make that choice. We can both stay slim and fit and protect our joints, tendons and ligaments. How? By pursuing a type of exercise MD and I wrote about in the book *Slow Burn*.

Let me tell you how we came to write *Slow Burn* .

Several years back an article appeared in *Newsweek* that our agent, Channa Taub, saw about a type of exercise that paid huge benefits but only required a few minutes per week. Channa, being totally exercise averse, figured that even she could endure 15-20 minutes per week, so she went to see visit the trainer who was the subject of the *Newsweek* piece and whose facility was in Manhattan. When she got there, she listened to the pitch from the trainer then asked if there was anyone closer to her home who did the same program. She was directed to a trainer named Fred Hahn, who had actually trained the trainers in the *Newsweek* article and who had a facility on the upper West side, much closer to where Channa lived.

Channa went to Fred's place on 78th Street, did a workout, and somewhere along the process she mentioned that she was a literary agent. Fred told Channa that he had wanted to write a book about his methods. Channa told Fred that she represented a number of authors who wrote on health topics and mentioned MD and me. Fred was excited because he had been using our book *Protein Power* as the nutritional primer for all his clients and had been trying to arrange for us to come to New York and do a talk on low-carb dieting. Synchronicity again.

Channa called and told me about Fred and his methods and sent me a copy of the *Newsweek* article. She said that Fred was open to the idea of collaboration with MD and me on a book about the subject. I read the *Newsweek* piece and thought it was okay, but nothing earth shattering. I told Channa that on our next trip to New York we would go with her to meet Fred and talk about his program.

Let me digress here to tell you that in both *Protein Power* and the **Protein Power LifePlan** we wrote exercise chapters, mainly because a chapter on exercise is expected in such books. We never held ourselves out as exercise gurus, but we knew that strength training was the best way to build lean body mass, so we primarily focused on that.

In due course we went to New York and found ourselves in Fred's facility. We all went to lunch and we spent the afternoon talking about Fred's program. Frankly, I took it all with more than a grain of salt.

Fred claimed that 15-20 minutes or so spent doing his program would increase muscle mass at anywhere from 100 to 150 percent faster than traditional strength training, that it would improve cardiovascular fitness (or what people think of as cardiovascular fitness) more than aerobic exercise, enhance flexibility, and increase bone density--all without risk to the joints, tendons, and ligaments. In other words, so Fred said, people could get more strength benefit from his method of training than they could from the three-times-per-week-in-the-gym pumping-iron workouts they were used to, more cardiovascular benefit than jogging or bouncing around in an aerobics class, more

healthful joint flexibility than they could obtain from practicing yoga or Pilates, and strengthen their bones, all in 15-20 minutes per week. You can see why I was skeptical.

We told Fred we would think about the book project and left with a number of medical references he gave us. I was eager to get into the literature and see if there was anything to all the information he had given us.

I spent about two weeks poring over all the medical papers I could find, and it turned out that Fred was right. His method of slow training, which replaces quantity of exercise with quality, does tremendously reduce the risk for injury, increases strength and muscle mass faster than traditional weight training, improves flexibility and lives up to all the rest of his claims. I found it to be much like the low-carbohydrate diet--those who have done it swear by it; those who haven't poo poo it. And like the low-carbohydrate diet, there is a wealth of medical literature that supports all the claims.

I called Channa and told her to tell Fred we would co-author the book with him.

This post probably sounds like a blog-fomercial for *Slow Burn*, but it really isn't. I only wrote it because I read the piece in the New York Times and realized how many people were getting injured unnecessarily simply by following doctors' orders to exercise more. If you're one of those people, you can benefit from *Slow Burn* style training.

### **Here's what I learned in a nutshell in my medical research on *Slow Burn*:**

The single best way to increase strength and muscle mass is to strength train. The best way to strength train is to do resistance exercise, i.e., weight lifting. The optimal way to lift weight--that which gives you the best result per time spent--is *Slow Burn*.

When I give talks on this subject almost everyone asks how *Slow Burn* training can increase cardio-pulmonary (heart and lung) fitness. That's the one idea that people have the most difficulty grasping. Let me tell you how it works.

When you run a few hundred yards (assuming you're out of shape) you end up puffing and panting and with your heart pounding. You assume that your heart and lungs aren't in good working order, and you assume that if you start a regimen of regular jogging or other aerobic exercise that in due course your heart and lungs will get in better shape. If you do pursue such a course, you will find that indeed you do breathe less hard and your heart doesn't pound, so you assume that both your heart and lungs are in better condition. The truth of the matter is that your heart and lungs are about the same as they were when you started--what has improved is your muscular fitness. Let me explain.

In the conditioning process the place where the rubber meets the road so to speak is at the level of oxygen entry into the muscle cells. As muscle cells work, they need oxygen. In an unconditioned muscle oxygen doesn't get into the cell particularly efficiently.

Consequently, your body, in an effort to get more oxygen to the working muscle cells, pumps more blood (your heart pounds) that contains more oxygen (thanks to your huffing and puffing). As your muscles become more conditioned, what happens is that the body's ability to get oxygen into the muscle cells becomes much more efficient. After your muscles are conditioned and you run a few hundred yards, your heart doesn't pound and you don't pant because your muscles are getting plenty of oxygen because of the conditioning effect in the muscles themselves. It has nothing to do with your heart or lungs.

Much is made of the great bicyclist Lance Armstrong's cardio-pulmonary fitness, but let me ask you this: if I could transplant Lance Armstrong's heart and lungs into you, do you think you could win the Tour de France? It is doubtful. Lance Armstrong was born with an enormous heart and lung capacity that he uses to full advantage because of the conditioning of his muscles. If he let his muscles de-condition, he would puff and pant after a short run just like we would.

If you enjoy exercise and are willing to pay the price for your enjoyment in the potential for bunched up hips, knees, and ankles, then by all means do it. If you are exercising because you want to stay fit and you do it grudgingly just because you think you ought to and figure that soreness and injury are part of the price you have to pay to stay fit as you age, then pick up a copy of *Slow Burn* (get it at the library if you don't want to buy it). You'll learn how in less than half an hour per week you can stay fit and spend the rest of the time that you are now spending on exercise doing something you really enjoy including just taking a long nap.

If you would like more information about Absolute Fitness just call 309.692.1066 or visit online at [www.absolutefitnesspeoria.com](http://www.absolutefitnesspeoria.com).