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### To stay strong and fit, mix it up!

The more variety there is, the better it is for your body.

By Nicole Tsong

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I'VE ALWAYS been part of the school of accidental cross-training. I love hiking and skate skiing for seasonal cardio, and my favorite routine is daily yoga. But I have never felt compelled to run or add in anything new. I scoffed at cross-training as a fitness plan for people who could afford trainers or wanted to win races. I don't race.

But over time, I also noticed my body had adjusted to my routine. Yoga was not as physically challenging as it once was. I decided to take spin and added in CrossFit. My body ached, and I was tired. I also was stronger, and happier.

For most of us, the triumph is doing some kind of fitness three or four times a week. But do any one thing long enough and we plateau.

If you start thinking your favorite neighborhood run doesn't feel as intense as it once did, that's because it isn't. Experts say that our bodies adjust to any kind of movement, and scientists have established that our bodies naturally try to use as little energy as possible when moving, according to a recent story in The New York Times.

But send a runner out to play Ultimate Frisbee, and he or she will wake up sore the next day, said Dave Johnson, president of Elite Fitness Training in Seattle and Bellevue.

"People like to do things they're comfortable with and that they're good at," he said. "If you're always comfortable, your body and mind never change."

Most of us tend to go all out when we're trying something new. If we decide to run, we go four times a week. But the more variety there is, the better it is for your body, Johnson said. Tweaking our workout is key to reaching our fitness goals.

A balanced mix of cardio, strength training, core work and flexibility will keep us healthier over the long haul, he said.

One of the best ways to mix up routines are fitness classes. Many people have gym memberships that languish. Gyms offer a wide variety of classes that can shake up our routine and are an easy way to try something new.

Pick something that makes you a little nervous, Johnson suggested.

"If you feel uncomfortable, then I think you're going to benefit from it," he said. "What's another lap around Lake Union going to do for you if you do it four days a week?"

Here are some ideas for those stuck in a workout rut.

### **Cardio junkies**

- Play a sport that requires lateral stability, like pickup basketball, Ultimate Frisbee or racket sports like racquetball or tennis.
- Add strength training, such as lunges or squats, to a track workout.

### **Weight-training devotees**

- Add in cardio. Meet a friend to run around Green Lake or add stair sets once a week.
- Take a yoga class for added flexibility.

### **Yoga/Pilates addicts**

- Do some additional weight lifting or circuit training. Try a Bodypump class or CrossFit.
- Add cardio: Go for a run or take a spin class.

If any of these ideas is new to you regardless, add them in; you may find something else that you love. Keep yourself accountable by setting alerts on your calendar for a new fitness class once a week, meeting a friend for a run or finding a new group to do track workouts. And treasure the new, sore you.

*Nicole Tsong teaches yoga at studios around Seattle. Read her blog at [papercraneyoga.com](http://papercraneyoga.com). Susan Jouflas is a Seattle Times staff illustrator.*