

TWENTIES



You're in raging bull mode. Use your high testosterone years to build active muscle mass and prepare your body for what lies ahead. Building lean muscle

tissue will never be easier than now, and that does not just mean building size. It means increasing muscle function and "fibre utilisation", which is basically the number of muscle fibres that are actively working for you (size, after all, isn't everything).

You should exercise in some way five days a week (try to play competitive sport as often as you can — the effect of competing will further increase your testosterone surge), and ensure at least three of those are workouts that will really push you hard, so you're not just going through the motions. Take it to the point where you just can't do any more, even if you wanted to. You can afford to overload your body substantially at this age; it can not only take it — it needs it.

MATT ROBERTS

TIME BANDITS

Getting older doesn't have to equal getting out of shape. Here's how to age-proof your regime

AS MEN, WE are filled to the brim with testosterone from boyhood through to around 30. The purpose of this is so we can fight, eat our kill and then take it home to impress the wife before fulfilling our brief in life: reproduction.

The bad news is what happens next. From the age of around 25 through to 70, our muscle mass decreases by around 30 per cent. There's also the matter of reduced nervous function, poor artery and vein function and reduced adrenal function. Not to mention moobs. But it doesn't have to be this way. Adapt your training as you go and you can still cheat the system. **E**

Matt Roberts is a personal trainer and writer (www.mattroberts.co.uk)

FORTIES



It makes sense to stop contact sports as there's a substantial risk you might get hurt and would have difficulty recovering. Basically, your soft tissue becomes less

elastic, and tearing these support structures becomes a real possibility. Play racquet sports instead — these help both with fitness and in maintaining a high level of nervous response and coordination.

Try boxing, kick-boxing or other "fight simulation" training — their aggressive nature helps to push up testosterone levels. Use weight-training at least twice a week (ideally three times) and focus on major muscle groups using moderate to heavy weight (12-15 reps). You should also spend 15 minutes in each session focusing on "core" strength (see opposite), and you should spend time on strengthening your supportive muscles, such as your "rotator cuff" in your shoulder, and areas such as your upper back to help maintain good posture as you grow older.

THIRTIES



OK, so you've peaked, but it's not all bad — your endurance can actually get better during your thirties, and this is a major help in lowering body fat in particular.

Structure your workouts so you know you are fulfilling your physical brief. You need to be doing four cardiovascular workouts a week, two of which should be at a constant pace (a run or bike ride) and two should be interval training-based, such as hill runs, structured circuit training or variable speed swimming. The structured changes of intensity in these sessions will ensure there are plenty of moments each week when your heart rate is pushed — it will also give you substantial increases in metabolism, which you'll need to stay as high as possible from here on in.

Make sure that you have a way of keeping your competitive edge and

increasing your adrenalin and testosterone levels — think about a triathlon or half-marathon. You need to create a reason for exercising hard, and having an event as a goal is a perfect way to do it. You also need to be working your muscles hard right now. Your testosterone may have dropped, but not by much, so you have to make sure that you put some positive stress onto the muscle fibres. Use a structured weight-lifting routine that uses heavy weights at least once a week, and moderate to heavy weights twice a week. The heavy weight should be so heavy that eight to 10 reps is about all you can manage per set, and the moderate should be no more than 12. There are other ways to train the muscles, of course, but it's good to keep it simple.

Finally, stretch — a lot. As you get older, your back is in danger of giving in before the rest of you, and the majority of back problems can be alleviated by good, regular stretching that will take the pressure away from the whole area. Spend between eight and 10 minutes stretching at the end of every session, no excuses.

FIFTIES PLUS



Recent research suggests that instead of being dangerous, regular intensive exercise at this age is equivalent to kicking a 10-a-day smoking habit. Your

testosterone levels, sugar levels and blood pressure are all more controlled if you exercise three or four days each week, for 30 minutes. Your strength won't be what it was 20 years ago, but you can work more on muscular strength endurance by using higher rep sets (12-20) and by using circuit training sessions to work on strength, using your body weight rather than heavy weights.

Getting older is inevitable, but with the right effort at the right time, you can slow down the degeneration and substantially improve in many areas of your fitness — feeling and looking younger than your years. Just don't ever wear a wig.