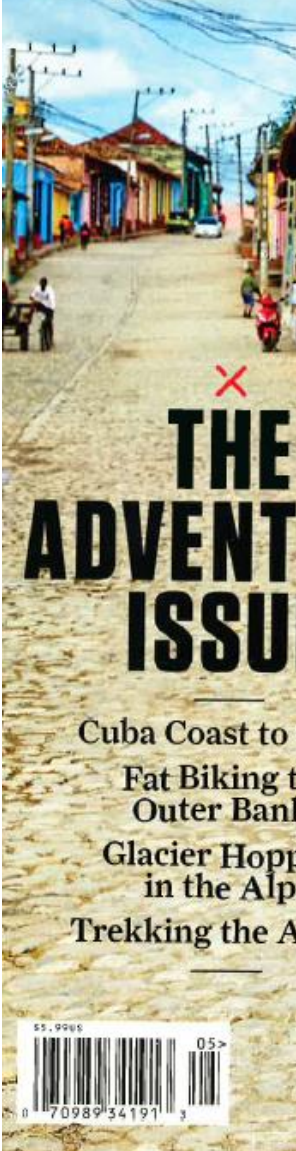


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THE ADVENT ISSUE

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Health & Fitness

Ask Dr. Bob

Our in-house doc answers your questions about health, fitness, and living adventurously.



HOT TRAINING TIP

I'm running a half-marathon in Costa Rica this month, and the temperature will be in the 90s. Vermont, where I live and train, hasn't even hit 60 yet. Is there any shortcut to acclimate?

Training in muggy environments triggers the body to increase its blood plasma volume. With more plasma, there's more blood available to go to the skin's surface to dissipate heat, cool you off, and help you push harder, longer. And there's actually a way to fake these perfect training conditions. Immediately after a training run, get in a hot tub or a hot bath and soak for 40 minutes. Repeat for one week (or at least six times). In a recent study, runners who did this improved their times in hot, humid conditions. I know I'll be using this strategy before my 50K standup paddleboard race in Maui this summer.

TRAVEL KNOW-HOW

The last time I took a flight, my ears wouldn't pop for days afterward. Any tricks for solving this in the future?

To understand what to do, here's a quick anatomy lesson: There's a tube called the eustachian tube that connects your middle ear to your throat. Though airplanes are pressurized, if a plane makes a sudden descent, the air in your middle ear shrinks, creating a vacuum, and the eustachian tube closes down. This is what makes your ear feel blocked. It's tempting to pinch your nostrils and blow through your nose to get the ear to pop, but that method can cause

enough pressure to perforate your eardrum. The safer way to open up the eustachian tube is to press a wet, hot towel right below your earlobe for five minutes. The heat relaxes the lining of the tube, allowing it to open.

FITNESS SECRETS

What's the best way to up my strength — doing 50 pushups all at once, or half in the morning and half at night?

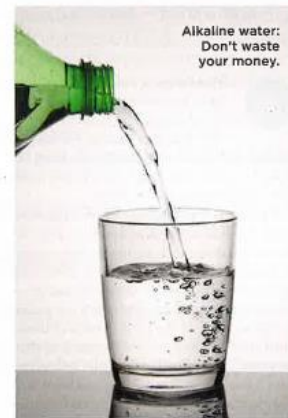
Both will work. You build strength when you put muscles under tension; the longer under tension, the stronger the muscle becomes. You can log that time quickly — by cranking out 50 pushups before you leave for work (there's an added cardio bonus to this method) — or accumulate it gradually by doing a couple of sets when you wake up and a couple before bed. This applies to any exercise, whether it's pushups, squats, or kettlebell swings. Here's the key, though: Your body adapts to any method you use in about eight weeks. To continue getting stronger, you have to change what you're doing every two months or so. Try adding reps, moving faster, or advancing the movement by adding weight.

HEALTH GIMMICKS

I keep seeing "alkaline-infused" bottled waters that are supposed to be healthier for you than regular water. What do you make of them?

Snake oil. I've seen dozens of these bottled waters, all purporting to help "correct" the body's pH level to boost energy and even exercise performance. The fact is that your

stomach is always highly acidic; it produces hydrochloric acid to help break down and digest the foods you eat. But the body also produces a substance called bicarbonate to carefully counter that acid. Trying to tinker with this well-balanced and effective system by drinking an alkaline water makes zero sense, is a waste of money, and has no health or fitness benefits. And if you do feel better after drinking one of these waters, there's a far simpler explanation: You're hydrated.



Alkaline water: Don't waste your money.

THE DOC IS ONLINE Email your questions for Dr. Bob Arnot to dr.bob@mensjournal.com.

TO-DO LIST

The gear, products, apps, and workouts we're checking out this month.



EPIC COOKING OIL

You've embraced eating healthy fats. Now try cooking with them, with Epic's duck fat, pork lard, and beef tallow oils. Research shows that these natural fats are part of a balanced diet, and the company guarantees its oils come from grass-fed cows and pigs and from cage-free birds. \$9; [Whole Foods Market](http://WholeFoodsMarket.com) or epicbar.com



22 MINUTE HARD CORPS

In 2003, trainer Tony Horton launched the high-intensity craze with his workout P90X. His new military-inspired program maintains that intensity, requires little equipment, and slashes the training time to 22 minutes a day. Trust us, you wouldn't want to do burpees and thrusters for any longer. \$40; 22minhc.com

BURNA, VISA, INAGRE/GETTY IMAGES