

Gold's Gym Newsletter

LAKE RIDGE & LORTON, VA

Winter 2026



Training the Signals That Shape Your Future

Welcome to 2026

Happy New Year, Gold's Gym family.

We are excited to welcome 2026 with you and continue supporting your health, strength, and quality of life through fitness. This year is about intention, consistency, and learning more about fitness, health, longevity, and living your best life. Let's start our first newsletter of 2026 with insights, practical education, and tools to support your body, your only home.

Your Genes Are Not Your Destiny

How lifestyle and daily signals shape your biology

We hear it all the time.

- *"I have bad genetics."*
- *"Diabetes runs in my family."*
- *"Osteoporosis is inevitable."*
- *"Heart disease is just in my DNA."*

The truth is, your body is not fixed. It responds and adapts to how you live. Genes are the blueprint, but your choices determine how it's used. Epigenetics shows genes don't activate randomly; they respond to your environment, habits, movement, nutrition, sleep, stress, and even how you breathe. Your genes are the piano keys, unchanging. The music is how the keys are played. Your lifestyle is the pianist. This matters because many conditions we assume are genetic are actually highly influenced by behavior and environment. Key takeaway: Your habits can outweigh genetic predispositions. Bone health is a perfect example. While genetics may influence bone structure, weight-

-bearing exercise, resistance training, nutrition, sleep, and hormonal balance all send powerful signals that tell your body to build stronger bones. Bones respond to stress in a good way. They adapt. They get denser. Movement is a message. The same is true for diabetes. Genetics may load the gun, but lifestyle pulls the trigger. Strength training, muscle mass, daily movement, blood sugar regulation, and stress management all influence how your body handles glucose. Many people hide behind genetics when, in reality, their bodies are waiting for new instructions. Heart health, joint pain, aging, and more are shaped by your habits, not just inheritance.

- Every workout you do sends a signal.
- Every night of quality sleep sends a signal.
- Every nutritious meal sends a signal.
- Every time you manage stress instead of letting it run you, you send a signal.

Your body is always listening. This is why training matters beyond aesthetics.

Resistance training does more than build muscle. It improves insulin sensitivity, supports bone density, balances hormones, and protects long-term mobility.

Cardiovascular work improves circulation, heart health, and cellular efficiency.

Recovery practices like stretching, breathwork, and rest signal to your nervous system that it is safe to repair and rebuild. Your thoughts matter too. Chronic stress creates a chemical environment that signals to your body that it is under threat. Calm, focused, intentional living creates signals of safety. The body responds accordingly. Age is not declining. Age is information. It reflects the accumulation of

signals you have sent over time. The empowering part is this. Signals can change. And when signals change, so do outcomes.

This is not about perfection. It is about awareness and ownership.

- You are not broken.
- You are not stuck.
- You are not at the mercy of your genetics.

You are an active participant in your health. At Gold's Gym Lake Ridge and Lorton, we focus on helping you build lasting strength, resilience, and capability. Each rep, class, and visit supports your lifelong health and well-being;

your key takeaway: every action invests in your future fitness. Your genes are listening. Make sure they are hearing the right message. Now, as we talk about the signals our bodies respond to, it's important to focus on an often-overlooked part of long-term health: your bones.

Why Are We Not Talking More About Bone Health

Strength, structure, and independence across decades

I am not sure why, in the fitness industry, we are not investing more time, education, and intention into bone health. Bone density begins to decline as early as age 40. Not 70. Not 80. Long before most people ever think about osteoporosis, fractures, or changes in posture, the foundation is already shifting. Bone health isn't just about avoiding fractures. It also means strength, balance, confidence, hormone health, posture, mobility, and long-term independence. Your skeletal system is not just a frame that holds you up. It is living tissue. It is

metabolically active. It responds directly to



how you move, how you train, how you fuel your body, and how you manage stress.

When bones weaken, vitality weakens. When bones are strong, the entire body rises with them. Here is the truth that many people do not realize. Osteopenia and osteoporosis do not suddenly appear in old age. They develop slowly over years and decades, often silently. The process accelerates when people stop strength training, stop challenging their bodies, undereat protein, experience hormonal shifts, or lead sedentary lifestyles. And the most important thing of all is load. Specifically, isometric loading. We do not do enough of it. So, what do we do for bone health in the gym? Easy fix. Go to the leg press, pick the highest weight, get in the machine, and press. The stack should stay still; if it doesn't, allow just one inch of movement. Hold for one minute. Repeat three times, three times per week. Do the same with a chest press and a shoulder press. This helps maintain healthy bones and support bone regrowth. The key to building bone is load. Maybe you need to incorporate this into your weekly workouts and call it "bone load day". It will make a difference in your overall health, longevity, and bone health. Bone loss is not simply a disease of aging. It is very often a disease of disuse. You can train your muscles all you want. You need to train your bones. Bones adapt to demand. Load them, and they grow stronger. Neglect them, and they weaken. This is basic biology. The body always adapts to what you repeatedly ask of it. Bone health is not fate. It is a choice made daily through movement and lifestyle. To proactively take charge, let's explore the tools and knowledge that support strong bones long before issues appear. Key takeaway: Daily choices shape your future bone health.

Awareness matters. A DEXA scan, the gold standard for bone density, shows skeletal health before symptoms. Many, especially women in their forties and fifties, pay attention only after a fracture. Bone health needs the same proactive care as blood sugar or cholesterol. Hormones also matter. As estrogen and testosterone levels shift with age, bone loss can accelerate. This can lead to declines in strength, posture, and resilience if you don't adapt your training. Hormonal changes are information, not weakness. Movement is the best response. Inside your body, bone is constantly being broken down and rebuilt. When building

keeps pace with breakdown, bones stay strong. When breakdown outpaces rebuilding, density declines. Chronic stress, inflammation, poor nutrition, lack of resistance training, and prolonged inactivity all tip the scales in the wrong direction. This is where fitness becomes essential. Training load sends a clear message to the skeletal system. Get stronger. Stay dense. Stay resilient. Walking is great. Yoga is valuable. Cardio is important. But for bone health, they are not enough on their own. Bones need load. They need a challenge. They need progression. They need you to start incorporating bone-loading days.

Mobility matters too. A mobile spine and hips allow bones to withstand loads safely and effectively. Strength and mobility work together. A strong but rigid body risks injury. A mobile but weak body misses the signal needed to build bone. The combination is what creates longevity. Nutrition also plays a role. Bones are not just calcium. They are mineralized collagen. Adequate protein intake is essential. Vitamin D supports absorption and hormonal balance. Vitamin K helps direct minerals into the bones. Magnesium and other minerals support bone metabolism.

Underfueling, especially as we age, accelerates bone loss far more than most people realize. Many people hide behind genetics as an excuse.

- *"My mother had osteoporosis."*
- *"Bone issues run in my family."*

Genetics may set your starting point, but not your outcome. Lifestyle is far more important. A family history of osteoporosis is not fate. It's a signal to act sooner and take bone health seriously now.

Bone health does more than affect movement. It impacts posture, confidence, balance, energy, and how you move through life. Strong bones support independence, presence, and vitality. This is why we train, not just to look good now, but to move well, stay strong, and live fully for decades. Bone health is active. Build, load, nourish, and support it. At Gold's Gym Lake Ridge and Lorton, we feel it is important to keep our members up to date on the latest and most forward-thinking information in the industry. Some information may be of interest to you, some not, but knowledge is power, especially when it comes to understanding the vessel you journey through life with. Your body is your master. How are you treating it?

Advancements in Muscle Health

Follistatin 242

Let's dig in. Strength trainers and bodybuilders, here are some of the latest advancements hitting the market. Follistatin 242 is a newer version of Follistatin and one of the most exciting discoveries in muscle health. In the fitness world, very few discoveries genuinely change how we understand the body. Follistatin is one of them. If you have spent time around bodybuilding, performance

training, or longevity-focused conversations, you may have heard Follistatin described as a powerful muscle regulator. And for good reason. Follistatin is a protein that naturally exists in the human body. One of its most important roles is balancing another protein called myostatin. Myostatin acts like a brake on muscle growth. It exists to prevent muscles from growing too fast or too large. Follistatin helps release some of that brake, allowing the body to express more of its muscle-building potential. A famous example often used to illustrate this comes from nature. Belgian Blue cattle are known for their unusually large, lean muscles, due to a genetic mutation that reduces myostatin activity. Similar effects have been observed in laboratory animals, where muscle mass increases significantly without a corresponding increase in body fat. These observations sparked a deeper interest in Follistatin and its role in muscle biology. For years, Follistatin 344 was the version most commonly discussed in bodybuilding circles. While effective, it broke down very quickly in the body and was less targeted. More recently, Follistatin 242 has gained attention because it was designed to last longer in the body and act more specifically within muscle-related pathways. In simple terms, it is a more refined and stable version of an already powerful biological regulator. One important clarification is this. Follistatin is not a steroid. It does not work by flooding the body with hormones or by forcing unnatural muscle growth. Instead, it supports the body's existing muscle regulation systems. Because of this, people do not describe its effects the way they describe anabolic steroids. What people commonly report when Follistatin 242 is part of their muscle health conversation is not overnight extreme size, but noticeable changes in how their bodies respond to training. Many users describe:

- More vascularity, especially during and after workouts
- Better muscle pumps during training
- More energized and productive workouts
- A feeling that muscles respond more quickly and fully to training



Another reason Follistatin 242 has generated so much interest is its relationship to body fat. As muscle mass increases or is better preserved, the body naturally becomes more efficient at burning calories. Muscle tissue is metabolically active, meaning it requires energy even at rest. When the body can maintain or build muscle more effectively, overall calorie burn increases throughout the day. In addition, Follistatin 242 appears to support better nutrient partitioning, making it more likely that the body sends nutrients to muscle tissue rather than storing them as fat. When muscles are more responsive to training and recovery, the body prioritizes repair and growth instead of fat storage. This is why many people report a leaner look over time when muscle health improves. It is not about directly chasing fat loss. It is about improving the body's internal balance so muscles are supported and fat becomes easier to manage. As always, muscle quality matters more than muscle size. Strength training remains the foundation. Follistatin 242 works with training, not instead of it. As we age, preserving muscle becomes one of the most important investments we can make. Muscle supports metabolism, balance, posture, bone health, and independence. Loss of muscle affects far more than appearance. It affects quality of life. At Gold's Gym, our focus is not on shortcuts or hype. It is building strong, functional muscle that supports your life both inside and outside the gym.

Follistatin 242 reinforces something we already believe. The body is adaptable. The body responds to effort. Strength, when built properly, supports every decade of life.

Supplement of the Month

Creatine

The energy system behind better training, recovery, and resilience. By now, you have heard that creatine is powerful. The media has done a good job of covering that part. What is discussed far less is why creatine works so well and why its value goes far beyond muscle size. Creatine is not just a muscle supplement. It is an energy system supplement. Every movement you perform in the gym, every rep, every sprint, every jump, and every powerful effort relies on a rapid energy system inside your cells called ATP. ATP is the currency your body uses to perform work. When ATP runs low, fatigue sets in and performance drops. Creatine's primary role is helping your body recycle ATP faster. This means your muscles and nervous system can maintain output longer before fatigue forces you to slow down. It does not make you stronger on its own. It allows you to access the strength you already have more consistently. This distinction matters.

Creatine does not create something artificial. It supports what your body already knows how to do. One of the least-discussed benefits of creatine is its improvement in training quality, not just training outcomes. When energy availability improves, form stays cleaner, focus stays sharper, and recovery between sets improves. Over time, better quality sessions add up to better results without needing to train longer or harder. This is why creatine fits so well into conversations about epigenetics and adaptation. Your body responds to signals. Strength training is a signal. Recovery is a signal. Nutrition is a signal. Creatine supports the energy required to respond to those signals more effectively. It helps your body express its full potential during training. Another area where creatine is gaining attention is neuromuscular health. Muscle does not work without the nervous system. Strength, coordination, balance, and reaction time all rely on how well the brain communicates with the muscles. Creatine supports energy availability not only in muscle cells but also in nerve cells. This may be one reason creatine is now being studied for cognitive performance, mental fatigue, and neurological resilience. After age 40, fatigue accumulates faster. Recovery takes longer. The nervous system becomes less efficient if it is not supported. Creatine helps buffer that decline by supporting cellular energy where it matters most. Creatine also pairs well with strength training for bone health, without needing to mention bones directly. Better energy allows better loading. Better loading supports stronger bones. The benefit is indirect but meaningful. Creatine's reputation in the past was limited because it was marketed for size. Today, it is being recognized for something more important.

- Creatine helps people show up with better energy.
- Creatine helps maintain output across a workout.
- Creatine helps reduce the drop off that leads to skipped sessions.
- Creatine helps preserve performance when life gets busy.

That makes it valuable not just for athletes, but for everyday people training for health, capability, and longevity. Creatine is not a shortcut. It does not replace sleep, nutrition, or effort. It supports the energy system that allows all of those things to work better together.

Creatine, Kidney Health, and the Gummy Question

Is creatine safe for kidney health, and are creatine gummies as effective as powder?



Let's clear both up.

Creatine and kidney health.

Creatine has one of the longest safety track records of any supplement used in fitness. Decades of research in athletes, older adults, and clinical populations consistently show that creatine does not harm kidney function in healthy individuals. The confusion often comes from a blood marker called creatinine. Creatinine is a byproduct of creatine metabolism and is commonly used as a marker of kidney function. When someone takes creatine, creatinine levels can rise slightly, but this does not indicate kidney damage. It simply reflects normal creatine breakdown. In healthy kidneys, this is not a problem. Individuals with pre-existing kidney disease or compromised kidney function should consult a medical professional before using creatine or any supplement. This is also true for protein intake and many common supplements. For the average healthy gym member, creatine has been shown again and again to be safe when used appropriately.

Powder versus gummies.

Creatine powder has long been the gold standard for a reason. It is stable, well absorbed, and delivers creatine in its most researched and effective form. Creatine gummies, while convenient, come with drawbacks that are not often discussed. Creatine is sensitive to heat, moisture, and time. In gummy form, it is exposed to all three. Over time, creatine can break down into creatinine, which reduces effectiveness. This means that by the time the gummy is consumed, the actual amount of usable creatine may be lower than what is listed on the label. Gummies also often contain added sugars, stabilizers, and flavoring agents that do not contribute to performance or recovery. While gummies may taste good and feel convenient, they are not the most reliable way to get the benefits creatine is known for. Powdered creatine, especially when mixed fresh with water or a beverage, remains the most consistent and effective option.

Fasted Cardio and Heart Rate Response

Why fasted cardio improves heart rate efficiency and HRV?

Many people notice something interesting when they do cardio first thing in the morning, before eating. Their heart rate rises faster, stays elevated with less effort, and the workout feels more efficient. This is not your imagination. There are real physiological underpinnings for why fasting cardio can be so effective, especially for heart rate training and heart rate variability optimization. Let's break it down.

Why does your heart rate rise faster during fasting cardio?

When you exercise in a fasted state, your body is operating with lower circulating insulin and lower immediate glucose

availability. Because quick fuel is not readily available, your nervous system has to work a little harder to meet energy demands.

This leads to three important effects.

1. First, your sympathetic nervous system activates more quickly. This part of the nervous system is responsible for alertness, effort, and cardiovascular drive. When insulin is low, adrenaline and noradrenaline rise more readily, increasing heart rate.
2. Second, your body shifts toward using fat and stored energy. Fat oxidation requires more oxygen per unit of energy than glucose. To deliver that oxygen, the heart has to pump more efficiently and often faster, even at lower workloads.
3. Third, blood volume and fasting plasma insulin are slightly lower in the morning. This means the heart has to work a bit harder to circulate blood, which naturally elevates heart rate sooner in the workout.

The result is simple: You reach training heart rate zones faster with less mechanical stress.

Why does it feel easier to sustain effort while fasted?

In a fed state, especially after carbohydrates, insulin levels rise, making blood sugar more available. This can feel powerful for strength or high-output work, but it also blunts adrenaline and smooths heart rate response. In a fasted state, your body is more sensitive to catecholamines, the hormones that increase heart rate, blood pressure, and focus. Because of this sensitivity, your cardiovascular system responds quickly and cleanly. Many people describe fasting cardio as feeling lighter, more fluid, and less bogged down. This is because digestion is not competing for blood flow, oxygen, or nervous system resources. The connection between fasting cardio and HRV optimization.

Heart rate variability is a measure of how well your nervous system adapts between stress and recovery. High HRV reflects flexibility, resilience, and strong parasympathetic tone. Fasting cardio improves HRV in several key ways.

1. First, it trains the nervous system to be more efficient. You create controlled stress in a low-insulin environment, then allow the body to fully recover afterward. This contrast strengthens autonomic balance.
2. Second, fasting cardio improves mitochondrial efficiency. Healthier mitochondria require less stress to produce energy, which improves recovery and raises

2. baseline HRV over time.

3. Third, fasting cardio reduces metabolic noise. Blood sugar spikes and insulin swings create internal stress that lowers HRV. Training before eating avoids this disruption and allows a cleaner nervous system signal.

Over time, this leads to a heart that responds quickly when needed and relaxes fully afterward.

Why fasting cardio is especially helpful as we age.

As we get older, insulin sensitivity declines, and recovery becomes more important than volume or intensity. Fasting cardio allows you to reach effective heart rate zones without excessive joint stress, long sessions, or pushing intensity too high. This makes it safer, more sustainable, and more effective for cardiovascular health. It also supports metabolic flexibility, which is one of the strongest predictors of longevity and resilience.

When fasting cardio is not ideal.

Fasting cardio is not for everyone, every day. If someone has blood sugar instability, adrenal fatigue, or poor sleep, fasted training may feel depleting rather than energizing. In those cases, a small amount of protein before training may be more appropriate.

- The goal is not deprivation.
- The goal is strategic stress with intelligent recovery.

The takeaway: It is easier to get your heart rate up during fasting cardio because the body is more hormonally responsive, more oxygen-dependent, and more neurologically engaged.

When used correctly, fasting cardio becomes a powerful tool to improve heart rate efficiency, autonomic balance, and HRV while reducing wear and tear on the body.

- Train the system.
- Then feed the system.
- Then let the system recover.

That rhythm is where real cardiovascular optimization lives.

The Bigger Picture

When you step back and look at the bigger picture, these topics all point to the same truth. Your body is not fixed. It is responsive. Epigenetics reminds us that daily choices shape how biology is expressed. Bone health teaches us that strength and structure are built through use, not time. Follistatin shows us that the body has built-in systems designed to support muscle when it is properly challenged. Creatine reminds us that energy and recovery are foundational to consistency. Different systems. One message. The body adapts to what you ask of it. Every workout sends a signal. Every night of sleep supports repair. Every nourishing meal provides information. Over time, these signals compound into strength, resilience, and



longevity. This is not about trends or shortcuts. It is about understanding how the body works and using that knowledge to train smarter, recover better, and stay capable for life.

Your fitness journey is not just about today's workout. It is about building a body that supports you in every decade ahead.

And that work begins and continues right here.

Thank you,

Lori & Jeremy Lowell

Lori and Jeremy

