HEARTBEAT FITNESS REPAIR
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Factory-trained service for residential and commercial fitness equipment
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What Lubricant Goes Where

UNIVERSAL REFERENCE CHART FOR FITNESS EQUIPMENT

More fitness equipment is damaged by the wrong lubricant than by no lubricant at all. Silicone belongs in some places and nowhere else. Oil belongs on chains and almost nothing else. Grease belongs on very little. And the aerosol can most people reach for first is not a lubricant at all. This chart covers every common surface in a home or commercial gym, what belongs on it, and what will ruin it. Print it and keep it with your supplies.

THE ONE RULE THAT PREVENTS MOST DAMAGE

Your owner's manual overrides this chart. Manufacturers specify lubricants for a reason, and some machines use dry-film or proprietary products where a general recommendation would be wrong. Use this chart when you have no manual, or to sanity-check what you are about to spray. When the two disagree, follow the manual.

THE CHART

SURFACE	USE	NEVER USE	NOTES
Treadmill deck, under the belt	100% silicone lubricant	Petroleum products, WD-40, grease, cooking oil	About ½ oz, applied to the deck, not the belt. Run empty at 1–2 mph afterward.
Weight stack guide rods	Light film of silicone, or a dry PTFE lubricant if specified	Grease, heavy oil, petroleum products	Thin film only. Excess collects grit and grinds the bushings faster than no lubricant.
Chains — rowers, air bikes, stair mills	Light machine oil or bicycle chain lube	Silicone spray, grease, WD-40 as a lubricant	A few drops worked along the chain, then wipe off all excess. A wet-looking chain is over-oiled.
Olympic bar sleeves	Light machine oil (3-in-1 type)	Grease, silicone, heavy oil	A few drops into the sleeve while spinning. Wipe the shaft dry so it never reaches the knurling.
Bar shaft and knurling	Nylon brush; light oil only on bare steel	Steel wool, wire brush on chrome or coated bars, any thick coating	In Florida humidity, bare-steel bars need oiling far more often than the internet suggests.

Seat posts and handlebar posts	Very light silicone wipe, if the post binds	Grease, petroleum products	Cleaning matters more than lubricating here. Wipe the post dry first, every time.
Rower rail / monorail	Nothing — clean and dry	Any lubricant at all	Lubricant on a rail collects grit and destroys seat rollers. Wipe it clean before every session.
Elliptical and bike pivots, bearings	Nothing — sealed or service-only	Penetrating oil, WD-40, spray lubricant	A squeak here needs inspection, not spray. Spraying masks the noise while the bearing keeps failing.
Spin bike felt resistance pad	Nothing — dry	Any lubricant or cleaner	The pad works by friction. Lubricant ruins it and it will need replacement.
Smith machine and linear bearing rails	Light silicone or manufacturer-specified dry lube	Grease, heavy oil	Wipe the rails clean first. Debris under a linear bearing scores the rail permanently.
Cables and cable ends	Nothing	Oil, silicone, grease	Cables are inspected, not lubricated. Lubricant hides corrosion at the swage fittings.
Pulleys and pivot bushings on strength equipment	Nothing by the owner — service item	Spray lubricant	A squeaking pulley usually means the bearing is failing, and it will saw into the cable.
Treadmill motor, rollers, drive belt	Nothing	Any lubricant	These are sealed or friction-dependent. Lubricant here causes slippage and heat.
Upholstery, grips, consoles	Mild cleaner only	Silicone, oil, solvents	See our cleaning guide — the wrong disinfectant does more damage than use does.

ABOUT WD-40

This deserves its own section because it causes more confusion than anything else. WD-40 in the familiar blue and yellow can is a water displacer and penetrant, not a lubricant. It is useful for freeing a corroded bolt, driving moisture off metal, or cleaning residue. It is not useful as a standing lubricant: it evaporates, leaves a thin film that attracts dust, and on a surface that needed real lubrication you are left worse off than before.

It is also actively harmful in several places on fitness equipment. Sprayed into an elliptical pivot it quietens a failing bearing just long enough for the bearing to destroy itself. Sprayed on a treadmill deck it does nothing useful and contaminates the belt. Sprayed near a felt resistance pad it ruins the pad. The company makes purpose-specific lubricants that are different products entirely — read the can, not the brand.

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH

- ▶ Silicone on guide rods: a film you can feel, not see
- ▶ Chain oil: applied, worked in, then wiped off until the chain looks dry
- ▶ Treadmill deck: about half an ounce, distributed across the deck center
- ▶ Bar sleeves: a few drops, spun in, shaft wiped clean
- ▶ If it drips, runs, or looks wet, it is too much
- ▶ If it collects dust within a week, it is too much

WHY OVER-LUBRICATING IS WORSE THAN UNDER-LUBRICATING

Excess lubricant does not stay put. It picks up dust, sweat residue, chalk, and garage grit and turns into a grinding paste that sits exactly where the moving parts are. We have replaced far more bushings and rollers ruined by too much lubricant than by too little. Thin, clean, and regular beats heavy and occasional every time.

NEVER USE THESE ON FITNESS EQUIPMENT

- ✗ Cooking oils or vegetable-based sprays — they go rancid and gum up
- ✗ Automotive grease on any surface specifying silicone
- ✗ Penetrating oil as a substitute for lubricant
- ✗ Graphite powder anywhere it can migrate onto belts or pads
- ✗ Any lubricant on a rower rail, felt pad, or drive belt
- ✗ Aerosols sprayed near consoles, electronics, or wiring

Not sure what your machine needs? Ask us before you spray.

We service every category of equipment in this chart, and a two-minute phone call is cheaper than replacing a set of bushings. If you would rather have it handled, our preventive maintenance service lubricates every specified point with the correct product, cleans what should not be lubricated, and inspects everything else while we are there.

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