

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## The Case for a Second Gym Membership

If your regular workout leaves you limp, go directly to one of these techy new fitness studios to...recover. Tom Brady does it—but is a bonus rehab gym worth another \$1,800 or more a year?



ILLUSTRATION: A. RICHARD ALLEN

By *Ashley Mateo*

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HOW FAR WOULD you go to be a stronger, fitter, *better* human? After a knockout workout at your go-to gym, would you drop in somewhere else to pump your muscles full of electrical impulses that hasten your rehab? Bake yourself in an 110-degree infrared sauna just to ease inflammation? Zap pain away with hand-held lasers? And would you pay upward of \$150 a month—on top of your regular gym membership—to do it?

Sure, it sounds ridiculous, but [Tom Brady](#) does it. Tony Robbins does it, too. Countless top-flight athletes and strappingly fit celebrities are now fixated on recovery, but it involves more than taking a day off from their regular gyms. The smart, sci-fi technologies mentioned above—offered by a new breed of fitness studios—improve the quality and speed of recovery, so soreness or muscle fatigue don't hold you back. And these new post-gym gyms are banking on the fact that people will pony up for the promise of more gains in less time.

“Most fitness has been focused on how you look in the mirror,” said Martin Tobias, CEO at Upgrade Labs, an advanced tech recovery facility in Santa Monica, Calif. But “people don't understand that growth doesn't happen in the gym,” he explained. “Exercise is the stress that breaks down your muscle fibers. It's the recovery phase that actually builds your muscles.”

Your immune system is constantly working to repair muscular micro-tears, but takes its sweet time. These studios aim to deliver recovery in a hurry. At Upgrade Labs (*from \$510/mo.*, [upgradelabs.com](http://upgradelabs.com)), you'll find baffling treatments like Pulsed Electromagnetic Field therapy, which uses low-level radiation meant to penetrate and heal damaged muscle tissue; and a virtual float tank, which purportedly helps reset your nerves' neurotransmitters.

ReCOVER, New York City's first dedicated recovery studio (*\$299/mo.*, [recover.nyc](http://recover.nyc)), which opened in March, hawks similar technologies. Its NuCalm sleep system aspires to deliver the equivalent of four hours of restorative slumber in one 30-minute session; and CVAC (Cyclic Variations in Adaptive Conditioning), a remarkably strange machine that looks like a cross between a space pod and a tanning bed. The luminous CVAC chamber rapidly changes air pressure to help improve circulation, boost oxygen-rich blood cells and flush lactic acid.

Skeptical? “There’s plenty of research to support the success of these technologies and how they help contribute to a faster recovery,” said David Reavy, a Chicago-based orthopedic physical therapist who works with NFL stars like Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver Alshon Jeffery. “A facility can offer access to a wide range of tools to give you what your body needs.”

But you’re probably not a pro athlete. Most weekend warriors can achieve comparative results at home—the market is flooded with high-tech DIY tools now (See “Can’t Make It to the Studio?” below) and there’s undoubtedly a foam roller gathering dust under your bed. Even with the hefty price tag, a suite of recovery devices might cost less than a year’s membership. “But people are too lazy to do it... and they don’t know how,” said Robin LaLonde, the owner of EDGE Athlete Lounge in Chicago, which has offered recovery services since launching in 2014 (\$185/mo., [edgeathletelounge.com](http://edgeathletelounge.com)).

At EDGE, clients can treat damaged cells, promote cell regrowth and relieve localized pain via laser therapies, among other technologies. That’s a far cry from having a trainer stretch you at your gym post-workout or rolling out your tight muscles with massage balls.

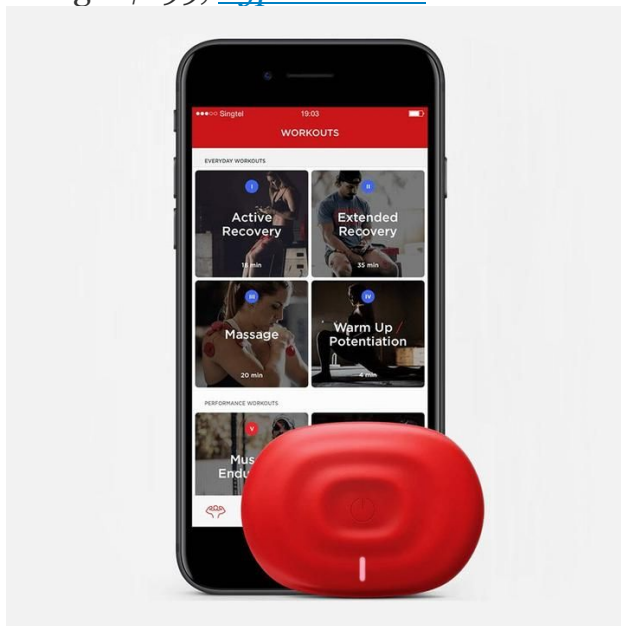
“It’s like a reset button for your legs,” said Alex Harvey, 25, a food scientist and runner who trained at EDGE in the lead-up to his first 50-mile race. “It has allowed me to push my body to new limits I never thought were possible. I notice a huge difference in inflammation of my joints after a tough trail session after using these tools.”

If these excessive technologies can get Tom Brady to his eighth Super Bowl, mere mortals stand to benefit a little, too. “Who wouldn’t want to maximize their body and muscle performance and feel better?” said Mr. Reavy. You won’t get that from the old lacrosse ball you use to work out the kinks. Then again, it doesn’t cost \$1,800 a year.

## CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE STUDIO? // These Four At-Home Tools Can Help You Bounce Back, Too



An embedded motor in the Hyperice Vyper 2.0 foam roller powers three levels of vibration therapy; lithium ion batteries give you two hours of use per charge. \$199, [hyperice.com](https://hyperice.com)



The smartphone-connected PowerDot employs electrical muscle stimulation technology to activate your muscles pre-workout and soothe them afterward. \$249, [powerdot.com](https://powerdot.com)



Pro athletes swear by the TheraGun G2Pro, which combines frequency, amplitude and torque settings to break up scar tissue and relieve pain across your entire body. \$599, [theragun.com](https://theragun.com)



The R8 Roller self-adjusts to your body, using springs to apply deep tissue pressure that loosens up your muscles without making you do any extra work. \$129, [rollrecovery.com](https://rollrecovery.com)