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Interval Training for Health and Fat Loss

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Interval Training is a form of cardiovascular training that provides maximum benefit in minimal time. The concept is simple: alternate periods of high intensity activity with periods of low intensity activity within the same workout. This allows for the exerciser to receive both the benefits of high intensity training, along with the benefits of lower intensity, longer duration exercise.

Interval training has been shown to:

- Burn significant calories in as little as 16-20 minutes.
- Significantly increase aerobic capacity.
- Substantially increase EPOC (excess post-exercise oxygen consumption) over traditional steady-state cardiovascular activity. Higher EPOC means a higher metabolic rate after exercise has been completed.

Making Interval Training Work for You

Traditionally, interval training has been used with advanced exercisers. For example, someone might run 100 yards as hard as possible, walk back 100 yards to the starting point, and then repeat the process five to ten times. Used in this way, much of the population may rule out interval training, as their bodies may not handle running well. Many people simply need to get to a base level of fitness before ever running. Others will not be able to run for orthopedic reasons.

However, I believe the concept of interval training can be applied to virtually any exercise situation. For example, a beginner might do a relaxed walk for a minute, followed by a power-walk for a minute, continued in an alternating fashion. This will be more effective for a beginner than simply taking a leisurely walk after dinner.

Lastly, you can use interval training in a variety of fitness settings. I believe the most effective for of intervals for fat loss is completing some sort of interval sprint workout. However, for people with joint problems or age concerns, interval can also be effectively used on elliptical machines, stationary bikes, rowers, and walking.

Sample Interval Treadmill program:

(Sample program lasting 20 minutes with 30 seconds high/ 60 seconds low)

Warmup

Minutes 0:00-3:00: Warmup at 3mph

Minutes 3:00-5:00: Jog at 5mph

Minutes 5:00-5:30: Speed up to 5.5mph

Minutes 5:30-6:00: Decrease to baseline of 5.0mph

Minutes 6:00-6:30: Speed up to 6.0mph

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Minutes 6:30-7:00: Decrease to baseline of 5.0mph

Minutes 7:00-7:30: Speed up to 6.5mph

Minutes 7:30-8:00: Decrease to baseline of 5.0mph

Minutes 8:00-8:30: Speed up to 7.0mph

Minutes 8:30-9:00: Decrease to baseline of 5.0mph

Main Body of Workout

Minutes 9:00-9:30: Speed up to 8.0mph

Minutes 9:30-10:00: Decrease to baseline of 5.0mph

Minutes 10:00-10:30: Speed back to 8.0mph

Minutes 10:30-11:00: Decrease to baseline of 5.0mph

Minutes 11:00-11:30: Speed back to 8.0mph

Minutes 11:30-12:00: Decrease to baseline of 5.0mph

Minutes 12:00-12:30: Speed back to 8.0mph

Minutes 12:30-13:00: Decrease to baseline of 5.0mph

Minutes 13:00-13:30: Speed back to 8.0mph

Minutes 13:30-14:00: Decrease to baseline of 5.0mph

Minutes 14:00-14:30: Speed back to 8.0mph

Minutes 14:30-15:00: Decrease to baseline of 5.0mph

Cooldown

Minutes 15:00-16:00: Maintain baseline of 5.0mph

Minutes 16:00-17:00: Decrease to 4.0mph

Minutes 17:00-18:00: Decrease to 3.0mph

Minutes 18:00-20:00: Walking at 2.5mph

Alternating Interval Training Workouts Throughout the Week

Interval training is one of the best forms of cardio for most people. However, instead of sticking with the same old program day after day, it's a good idea to alternate programs. Here are three programs recommended by my colleague Dr. John Berardi in his book *The Metabolism Advantage*.

Interval workout #1:

5 minute warmup

30 seconds at high intensity, 90 seconds at low intensity

Weeks 1 and 2: Perform 7 total intervals

Weeks 3 and 4: Perform 8 total intervals

5 minute cooldown

Interval workout #2:

5 minute warmup

Intervals: 60 seconds high intensity, 60 seconds low intensity

Weeks 1 and 2: 7 total intervals

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Weeks 3 and 4: 8 total intervals

5 minute cooldown

Interval workout #3:

5 minute warmup

Intervals: 90 seconds high intensity, 180 seconds low intensity

Weeks 1 and 2: 4 total intervals

Weeks 3 and 4: 5 total intervals

5 minute cooldown

**Rotate these three interval workouts. Pick whatever modality you want to use (ie. Treadmill, elliptical, stepmill)*

****A note on the intensity of your intervals.** According to Dr. John Berardi in The Metabolism Advantage, “On a scale of 0 to 10 – with 0 being comatose and 10 being the hardest you could ever work – you should hit an intensity of 9 during your 30 second intervals, 8 during your 60-second intervals, and 7 during 90 second intervals. During your recovery period, aim for an intensity of 3.”