



- An Introduction To Interval Training -

One of the most effective forms of training for those looking to burn off body fat and improve their fitness, is 'Interval Training'. Now there are many different formats and 'brands' of Interval Training (HIIT, Crossfit, Fartlek etc), but the basics remain the same: Instead of plodding along at the same old pace on the Treadmill/Bike/X-Trainer/Road-Run, you alternate short periods of high intensity effort with much lower paced recovery periods - hence 'Intervals'.

For the majority of exercisers, keeping the intervals to a duration of 1 minute is optimal, ensuring the ratio is kept 1:1 - i.e. 1 minute effort to 1 minute recovery. 5-6 such intervals are carried out (10-12mins total activity), before several minutes of complete rest (try and remain on your feet during this time, maintaining light movement while you recover). A 2nd set of 5-6 intervals is then completed, perhaps using a different exercise modality for variety if in the Gym (i.e. do the 2nd set on the bike instead of the treadmill, for example).

The pace/intensity of the 'effort' intervals will be unique to the individual - the idea being however, to ensure you're pushing yourself somewhere to around +80% of your working capacity. The more technically savvy gadget users amongst you may use a heart rate monitor for this purpose, but simply gauging your effort level on a scale of 1-10 (aiming for an 8 or 9) will also suffice. The recovery interval is then taken right down to a much lighter pace of around 50% working capacity (about a 5 on your subjective scale).

Interval Training brings with it a whole host of benefits, including higher calorie expenditure (along with the 'Afterburn Effect' - raised metabolism for several hours, meaning more calories burnt even after finishing your workout), greater cumulative workload, increased endorphin release ('feel good' chemicals in the brain), plus a reduction in workout time!

I'll cover Interval Training in more depth in a future article, looking at the various methods and specific workouts that have been developed around this concept, and what the science behind it all is. In the meantime though, try replacing one of your standard 'steady-pace' workouts with a simple Interval based session once in a while, and feel the benefits!

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