

Put An End to Hours of Cardio; Kick Up the Intensity, Shorten the Time and See Big Results

It always drives me crazy when I see people in the gym, day after day, walking or jogging on the treadmill for hours. They do the exact same routine, usually talking on the cell phone, reading a magazine or watching their favorite TV show. I see them every day for months go through the same workout and their bodies never change! Why is this? It's simple.

When you initially start working out, it seems difficult to do these workouts. But, your body is an amazing machine and therefore, it quickly becomes efficient at doing the same workout and like anything, if you don't push yourself or change it up, your body adjusts. Each time we repeat a particular workout, our body adapts to meet the demand, becomes more efficient and in turn, burns less fat and calories. So, the bottom line is you need to break out of your "cardio comfort zone" and challenge yourself to see faster fat loss results.

As human nature will have it, most people take the path of least resistance, which results in a less than effective cardio routine. This in turn, impacts the time it takes to see results. When people tell me they need to stay in the "fat burning zone" in order to burn calories, it makes me crazy! FORGET about the fat burning zone! As far as I'm concerned, this is an excuse not to push yourself. Your metabolism will increase only when your body is forced to change. When it comes to cardio and fat loss, INTENSITY is the secret ingredient to see changes, period!

So when people ask me why it's better to do an intense 20 minute workout, as opposed to a slow, steady 30-45 minute workout when you burn more calories over 45 minutes, my answer is simple. Although you may burn more calories while you're working out, once you stop that workout, your metabolism also stops burning. However, when you perform your cardio at an intense level (intervals), your body will spend the rest of the day expending energy to recover from the challenge you just put it through. This is called EPOC (excess post-exercise oxygen consumption) and it means that you consume more oxygen recovering from an intense workout than you would from a slow steady cardio workout, no matter how long that workout is.

How do you know if you're not pushing yourself hard enough?

- 1) If you can hold a conversation with the person on the cardio machine next to you or the person on the other end of the cell phone!
- 2) If you are getting into the magazine or book you are reading to help pass the time.
- 3) You are enjoying your favorite TV show.
- 4) You have not worked up a sweat and feel you could go another 20 minutes!

These are all signs that you are not working hard enough to get the results you want. You need to focus on what you're doing, work hard and be done! It is only 20 minutes! Surely you don't need to find some distraction that will take away from your workout.

Here's how it works:

Start with the form of cardio you are comfortable doing and perform as follows:

- 1) 3-5 minute warm up.
- 2) 1 minute intense
- 3) 1-2 minutes easy
- 4) repeat 5-6 times
- 5) Cool down

This is just an example to show you how it works. Give it a try and I promise you will be shocked at how much more effective, not to mention efficient it is.

To change it up and keep it from getting boring, try shortening the *hard* intervals to 30-45 seconds while **simultaneously** increasing the intensity. Keep the *easy* part to 1-2 minutes. As you shorten the intense intervals, it is important that you increase the intensity from your level in the 1 minute interval and do additional intervals (8-10). Repeat until you've completed 15-20 minutes.

An Example of how I do it on a treadmill is as follows:

1 minute intervals:

Note: I keep it on a 7.5 to 10.0 **incline** throughout these workouts. The levels shown below are the speed.

- 1) 3.0-4.0 warm up (3-5 mins)
- 2) 7.5-8.0 intense (1 min)
- 3) 3.5 easy (1-2 mins)
- 4) 6 intervals
- 5) Cool down

30-45 second intervals:

- 1) 3.0-4.0 warm up (3-5 mins)
- 2) 8.5-9.0 intense (30-45 secs)
- 3) 3.5 easy (60-90 secs)
- 4) 8-10 intervals

5) Cool down

These are two examples so you are not confused. You need to do these intervals according to your individual fitness levels. The only thing I stress is you need to push yourself! By this I mean a subjective effort of 8-9 on a scale of 10. It must be intense to see results.

*Please note that if you are new to exercise, don't attempt this without consulting your physician and even then, work yourself up slowly to being able to perform this type of exercise. This is not for everyone.

Types of Interval Training

I also want to mention that interval training is not limited to a single cardio machine. It can be performed in a number of different ways as seen below:

- 1) Change machines every 3-5 minutes (i.e. start on treadmill, then move to elliptical and then stationary bike).
- 2) Hill sprints. Find a hill outside and after warming up, sprint up the hill. Walk down. Do this 5-10 times, depending on your fitness level.
- 3) My favorite type of interval training is doing different cardio intensive exercises. I get bored doing the same thing every workout. I love to change it up and here is an example of what I may do when I need a change:
 - Jump rope: 1-3 minutes
 - Treadmill: 5 minutes (30 second sprints/30 second walking intervals)
 - Push ups: 45 secs
 - Burpees: 1 min
 - Repeat 2-3 times

So these are just a few examples, but a place to start if you are interested in kicking up your workouts. In order to see big changes, it is also important to do resistance training, as well as maintain a proper diet. Nutrition is imperative to any weight loss plan. Just remember, you can not "work off" a bad diet, no matter how hard you try.

In short, remember that with each workout you perform-whether it be interval training or resistance training- it is important that you find a way to change it up and keep yourself challenged. Training in your comfort zone is useless. Good luck and let me know how it goes! For additional information and/or workouts feel free to contact Rachel or Linda at

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