

# GET ACTIVE. STAY ACTIVE

How can interval training help me burn more fat?

-Mark

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Intensity can play a major role in the success on one's exercise program. In particular, when it comes to weight loss, many individuals seem to take the generic approach to aerobic exercise-- that is, one of long duration and low intensity. Although this method can be effective, exercisers are often missing out on the fat-shedding benefits of kicking up the intensity. Interval training is a great method of cardio conditioning which can help jumpstart a weight-loss program. It can also be a good way to switch things up and keep the body from adapting to an exercise program too easily. Once the body adapts to an exercise program, it is frequently difficult to see continued benefits without making some changes.

Interval training usually involves training at a high intensity level for a specified period of time followed by a recovery interval or a period of lower intensity exercise. For example, one could run for an interval at an intense pace of a hard run or near sprint and then follow this with a lower intensity period consisting of a walk or light jog. This would complete one cycle or interval period. This exercise pattern would be repeated until the desired amount of interval periods is reached. Normal work to recovery ratios for interval training involve a 1:2 or 1:3 work to recovery ratio. Specifically, an individual might run at a hard run or sprint level pace for 30 seconds (work interval) and then follow with a light walk or jog for one minute to three minutes (rest interval). Completing five intervals at a one minute to three minute ratio would constitute a 20 minute workout. Most interval workouts will last no longer than approximately 25 minutes because of the higher intensity and effort involved. Consequently, because of this high level of intensity, it is recommended that this type of workout be performed only 2 - 3 times per week.

The benefits of interval training are many. This type of cardio training enables one to burn a great number of calories in a short period of time. It can play an integral role in losing fat by maximizing the amount of calories burned as well as allowing more time for other activities such as strength

training, giving an individual an optimally balanced routine. Busy individuals who are strapped for time will find this method of exercise beneficial, easily fitting into jammed schedules.

Overall, interval training can be a very effective method to integrate into an exercise program especially if fat loss is a main goal and/or only a small window of time is available for workouts. Care should always be taken when training at higher intensities, and this method is not the best for everyone. However, if you are able to train at higher intensities with no problems, then interval training may be a good addition to your fitness program.

Please submit any questions you may have for our sports medicine experts by e-mailing [cangelel@dmc.org](mailto:cangelel@dmc.org). In the subject line, please write, "Get Active, Stay Active." We will respond to all the questions we receive and select one each month to feature in our column.

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