

High Intense Interval Training

By Mark Lauren

This is the question that I'm going to address, but first, let's take a look at what it means to be fit. The dictionary definition of fit is, **in good physical condition; in good health: He's fit for the race.** Webster's Dictionary isn't very helpful on this one, so in my book *You Are Your Own Gym* I define fitness as the degree to which a person possesses muscular endurance, strength, power, balance, flexibility, coordination, speed, and cardiovascular endurance. These are the main components that make up fitness. A byproduct of having or acquiring these skills is an attractive physique that has the right proportions of muscle and fat, and it's this byproduct of fitness that most of us are mainly after.

What many people don't realize is that the best way to change your physique is to focus on the development of these skills and not the other way around. Most people train with their emphasis on changes in body composition or, even worse- weight. When you train properly, your body composition changes; there is a greater need for cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance, strength, and power. It also changes because your body is burning far more calories than normal for a couple of reasons that I'll mention later.

Remember that form follows function. Your body changes in order to give you the required skills to perform the activities demanded of it. In order for you to acquire the components of fitness to a greater degree, your body drops body fat and gains muscle. It is important for people to realize this simple principle. We need to focus on creating a demand that develops the skills that cause our bodies to change its body composition. It is also important for us to realize that our emphasis should be on the improvement of our performance, since that is ultimately what will develop the skills of fitness that cause the byproduct that we are after. Now that we understand what it is that our workouts should emphasize we can ask the question as to how to best develop these skills in the least amount of time?

The answer is short intense interval type workouts using compound movements that engage many muscles at once. Through the use of high intensity interval training (HIIT), we are able to develop all the qualities of fitness and burn many calories in one short workout. Lucky for us, the most effective method of developing all of these skills turns out to also be the most time efficient.

These short intense workouts are effective for several reasons.

1. First, they build muscle. Muscle plays an important role in your metabolism. It is a metabolically expensive tissue that causes you to burn extra calories even while at rest! The average adult American gains 2.2 pounds of fat per year, due to an ever slowing metabolism. The slowing of the metabolism is mainly due to a loss of muscle as we age. By gaining just 2 pounds of muscle and maintaining it, the average American could completely reverse this weight gain. Muscle not only allows you to burn far more calories while at rest, it becomes especially important while performing high intensity workouts. Adding a few extra pounds of muscle, to most people's frame, is like upgrading from a 4 cylinder motor to a 6 cylinder motor, and while working out, that larger motor requires much more fuel to operate. That extra fuel is- calories!

Never neglect this principle when losing weight. It is the number one fitness mistake. People often lose a massive amount of weight in a short amount of time, but their body composition doesn't change all that much because of the large amount of lost muscle tissue. This is not only unattractive to most people, but it also makes it much harder to keep the excess fat off. Think body composition not weight. No, scratch that. Think performance! The end result that you're looking for will follow.

2. The second reason that HIIT is so effective is that these workouts cause you to burn extra calories long after the completion of the workout. For up to 36 hours after HIIT your metabolism remains boosted while restoring the body's systems to normal.

3. HIIT is also very effective at developing strength and cardiovascular performance. Ironically, the impact that HIIT has on cardiovascular performance is actually much greater than that of “cardio”. Cardio, on its own, will yield no gains in strength and will likely cause you to lose strength and muscle mass, which is bad for the reasons discussed. Go to the forum at www.MarkLauren.com to find two studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of HIIT compared to cardio. In the first of these studies, a group doing only 4 minutes of HIIT, 5 days per week, was compared to a group that did 1 hour of target heart range training 5 days per week. At the end of 6 weeks, the HIIT group had a 40% greater gain in cardiovascular performance and a 28% gain in strength! The cardio group had no gains in strength. The second study compared the impact of the two training methods on body composition and found comparable results.

Through the use of short intense workouts that train muscular endurance, strength, power, and cardiovascular endurance all at the same time, you are able to build muscle while giving your metabolism a lasting boost. Next time you're working out, think intensity not duration. Also, by using bodyweight movements that engage many muscles at once in HIIT you are able to get exceptional results with an incredibly small sacrifice of time. These workouts can be done anywhere anytime. Better results can be had in about the same amount of time that most people spend driving to and from the gym.