

The York University Staff Association Health and Wellness

News and Views

In an ideal world, we would all have time to fit in extensive, effective and thorough workouts. In reality everyone has so much to juggle in life, and unfortunately exercise is one of the first things to be dismissed when the schedule becomes out of control. When it comes to fitting exercise into your busy life - the key is to actually make it happen. Does it require a 90 minute hot yoga class or a 60 minute insanity DVD? Absolutely not. Short intense workouts and back to basics strength training sessions have proven to be very effective and that is why they are among the hottest fitness trends in 2015.

Obstacle course races have become increasingly popular among those trying to test their physical and mental strength. However for individuals looking for a challenging sustainable workout that takes much less time commitment and is free of wall scaling and fire walking, high intensity interval training (HIIT) is the perfect option. It is becoming increasingly clear, that shorter more intense bouts boost both short term and long-term exercise capacity, resulting in more efficient workouts that take a fraction of the time, therefore allowing more and more individuals to actually reach their health and wellness goals.

I can't stress enough that by and far the best workout is one that you will actually DO. While good intentions are honourable they will not get you far in terms of reaching your fitness goals. If you plan to do an hour workout everyday and your schedule realistically does not allow for that time commitment, time and time again... you are not going to exercise. Recent studies found that 30 minutes of daily exercise incorporating HIIT provides equally effective weight loss and strength training benefits as does a 60 minute workout. HIIT allows for a fitness professional to incorporate a lot of very effective work into a short period of time. It is a training technique in which you give all-out, 100% effort through quick, intense bursts of exercise, followed by a short, sometimes active opportunity to recover. This type of exercise elevates and maintains your heart rate thus burning more fat and calories in less time.

Besides burning more calories and fat than traditional methods high interval intensity training has also been shown to produce greater health benefits overall. HIIT creates a greater after burn (a word that describes the excess post-exercise oxygen consumption, or calories expended after exercise) than steady training at a lower heart rate does. Another important benefit to high intensity interval training is its ability to naturally increase the body's production of the human growth hormone (HGH) HGH is a foundational biochemical that promotes muscle growth and effectively burns excessive fat. Recent studies have shown that when you exercise for

more than 75 minutes straight your body releases cortisol (a stress hormone) which can actually inhibit weight loss, causing your body to react by storing fat and retaining water out of self protection.

You need not worry about having expensive gym equipment or an equally expensive membership to a fitness club. HIIT does not require any equipment to achieve maximum effects and can be done in the fresh, open air of the great outdoors, or in the comfort of your own living room. Body weight is all you need. High knees, fast feet, or anything plyometric like jumping lunges work just as well to get your heart rate up. Just be sure to move from intense periods of exercise to low-intensity recovery spells. In fact - If you are using any equipment for HIIT training it can actually make the workout less effective and less productive for your body because the strain can then transfer from intense cardio to muscle. You want the focus to be pushing your heart rate to the max, not your biceps.

Like all things in fitness interval training isn't a one size fits all approach. It doesn't have to be difficult. High intensity interval training can be safely applied to many different individuals with all fitness levels. Trained instructors provide several options and can scale interval training to any level of fitness. For instance if a participant has a high fitness threshold, the speed and agility that is exerted will be different from someone less conditioned, however the benefits would be the same.

I am so excited about this new trend. It adds to the growing body of evidence showing that 30 minutes is all it takes to incorporate an efficient yet very effective workout into your day. Experts recommend individuals don't do more than 2 days of HIIT per week. It is essential to have a well rounded fitness program, including even a day or two during the week that's more of a recovery based casual walk or something to that effect.

The YUSA fitness program incorporates several workouts including high intensity interval training. Mixing it up provides more benefits, and keeps things interesting. Something is always better than nothing when it comes to your health. Long gone are the days of not having enough time for exercise. The next time you are ready to blow off your workout because of your busy schedule, skip the excuses. Science proves that not having enough time to exercise is not an excuse.

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January 2015