



# Interval Training

When you're about to lace up your running shoes, put on your swimsuit or get on your bike, including interval training in your workouts can burn more calories and boost your cardiovascular fitness level by moving you out of your comfort zone while it spices up your workout. Interval training involves peppering your regular workout with short, strenuous bursts that keep your heart rate up and burn more calories. You simply take the pattern of repeated bursts of strenuous activity followed by low-intensity recovery periods and integrate it into any aerobic program.

**Caution:** Intervals aren't for everyone. Don't do intervals if you have a heart condition, high blood pressure, a joint injury, are pregnant, have been advised by your physician to stick with moderate-intensity exercise or have just begun a fitness program. If you are uncertain, check with your physician before stepping up the pace of your workout.

## BASIC INGREDIENTS

⇒ First: for the first month only 1 of your workouts per week should include intervals. After your body has adapted to the extra exertion of intervals and your energy levels are increasing, you can try to shorten your recover phase, lengthen your intensity phase, add more reps, or add a set of intervals to a second aerobic workout in the week. If you are using an aerobic machine you can also boost the incline or add more resistance.

⇒ Second: go gradually and be patient with yourself. You're going to love what intervals do for your workouts and your cardiovascular fitness, but the first few times won't be easy.

⇒ Third: you need to listen to your body and determine what qualifies as recovery and interval paces.

Recovery, the low-intensity phase, occurs when your heart is working between 55 and 65 per cent of your maximum safe heart rate. If you don't want to be constantly checking your pulse, be sure you are able to comfortably carry on a conversation while doing your activity. Your recovery time should be at least twice as long as the interval. So if your high-intensity segment is 1 minute, the low-intensity segment is 2 to 3 minutes.

During an interval, which is your high-intensity segment, you should be working at 75 to 85 per cent of your maximum safe heart rate, or be finding it very difficult to talk (but not impossible). Never go over 85 per cent.

Try these fun ways of working intervals into your favorite exercise

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## WALKING or RUNNING

In a 30 minute workout, after your 5 minute warm-up, in the core part of your workout, alternate 30-second bursts of very fast walking or running with 1-2 minute recovery sessions at your warm-up pace. Do 4 repetitions for every 20 minutes of core walking or running. Finish with 5 minutes of cool-down at your warm-up pace.

Hills are great interval tools: walk briskly up a hill and recover going down. Or use lampposts or telephone poles: walk or run at your fast pace from the first to the second and go at your slower pace from the second to fourth. Repeat 3 more times.

## TREADMILL or ELLIPTICAL TRAINER

**Walkers in a 30 minute workout:** begin with a warm-up of 5 minutes at 3 m.p.h. or at a light resistance. During the core part of your workout, do 4 reps of 1 minute each at 4 m.p.h. - or at whatever speed/resistance achieves 75 to 85 per cent of your maximum safe heart rate - followed by 2 - 3 minutes at 3 m.p.h. Do 1 set of 4 reps for every 20 minutes of your core workout. Finish with a 5 minute cool down at your warm-up pace.

**Runners in a 30 minute workout:** Warm up for 5 minutes at 5 m.p.h. or at a light resistance. Then do 4 reps of 1 minute each at 6 m.p.h. or at a heavier resistance, followed by 2 - 4 minutes at 5 m.p.h. Do 1 set of 4 reps for every 20 minutes of your core workout. Finish with a 5 minute cool down at your warm-up pace.

## SWIMMING

Within your workout, use laps as your intervals. Try 4 reps of 1 fast lap followed by 2-3 slow laps. Or you can rest and watch the clock instead of swimming during the recovery. Try 4 intervals of 50 metres with a 30-second rest in between each interval.

## CYCLING

Unless you're on a track, it's hard to go full out when you're biking outdoors. Instead try a hilly route once a week.

**In a 30 minute workout on a stationary bike:** maintain an 80 r.p.m., warm up for 5 minutes at low-medium resistance. Then, in the core part of your workout, cycle for 1 minute at high speed and/or resistance followed by 2 - 3 minutes at medium speed and resistance. Repeat 3 more times. Finish with a cool down of 5 minutes at low-medium resistance and speed.

*Working with you for lasting change, Lynda Pedley*

References: Diane Hart (homemakers.com)