Interval Training Benefits

In the past exercise physiologist held that interval training was only for highly trained athletes and not for those people who want to lose body fat. New studies show that interval training promotes the loss of body fat while building superior cardiorespiratory levels of fitness.

What are the benefits of interval training?

· Interval training increases muscle mass, heart rate recovery, strength, power, speed, and Post Exercise Caloric Expenditure (PECE). Studies show that anaerobic interval training is far more effective in creating PECE than aerobic exercise by 38 percent. From a fat metabolism standpoint, interval training increases lean muscle tissue as oppose to decreasing lean muscle tissue with aerobic training. An increase in lean muscle tissue will speed up your metabolism as well as improve fat mobilization and utilization.

· Interval training increases your anaerobic or lactic acid threshold. As your VO2 max increases, you will be able to exercise at higher heart rates without experiencing the pain of lactic acid accumulation in the muscles. This will allow you to expend more energy (calories) in a shorter period of time.

· Interval training promotes the recruitment of Type II muscle fibers to do aerobic work. It also induces changes in skeletal muscle oxidative enzyme activities similar to those observed in endurance training. Interval training also increases mitochondrial size and number. The muscle mitochondria are where oxidation takes place to utilize fuel sources such as glycogen and fat.

· Interval training takes less time. The average bout of interval training is thirty minutes as opposed to sixty minutes for aerobic exercise. The average frequency for interval training is three times per week as opposed to four to six times a week for aerobic exercise. This time saving feature of interval training allows time for cross training (i.e. weight training).

Who should Perform Interval Training?

Interval training is stressful on the cardiorespiratory, cardiovascular, skeleton structure, and muscles of the body. Therefore, only those individuals who are currently in training should perform interval training. If your V02 max is below 33.00 ml/kg/min you should perform aerobic exercise training until you reach this level. If you are just starting an exercise program your muscles will need time to adapt before you start a interval training program.

Most Common Mistakes

· Starting an interval training program before your V02 max is 33.00 ml/kg/min or above.
· Starting an interval-training program before your muscles have adapted to strenuous exercise.
· Failure to follow the interval training heart rate prescription.
· Failure to follow the interval training duration.
· Failure to allow the body to recover before beginning the next stress interval.
· Failure to perform the recovery week of the microcycle.

· Failure to use a heart rate monitor to monitor heart rates.
· Failure to perform the V02 max test monthly.
· Failure to follow a warm-up and cool-down routine.
· Failure to allow for a day of rest between interval training.