

What is HIIT?

HIIT stands for High Intensity Interval Training.

HIIT is essentially a type of exercise, be it cardio or resistance training. HIIT alternates between periods of high intensity, and low intensity (or recovery

AN example of HIIT would be to run for 30 seconds at a high intensity, followed by a 90 second walk to recover from the sprint. The concept is to rapidly increase your heart rate, followed by a steady decline, before repeating the intense period once again. This would continue for a pre determined time period.

With HIIT being so extreme in nature, the workouts tend to last no more than 20 minutes, unless you are the more advanced trainer. Effective HIIT workouts can in fact be as short as 10 minutes.

HIIT can be completed on more than just a treadmill. It is actually the safer option to perform your HIIT session on a bike, stepper, or even a cross trainer. As your legs turn to jelly, the treadmill can become quite unsafe for the inexperienced user. There is also no problem performing HIIT outside, as long as you have the ability to keep time and progress with intensity.

The recommendations for frequency of HIIT training vary between persons. If you are a beginner, you may start with two sessions of 10 minutes, supplementing the HIIT with a further 10-20 minutes of steady state training. The more advanced the user, the more sessions that can be completed. Be careful not to leave yourself room in your training week to increase HIIT frequency and length to break through plateaus.

One should limit HIIT workouts to no more than 3x per week. The reason I say this is because if you are including your resistance training effectively, you are probably doing HIIT sessions there also.

Correct, HIIT can be in Resistance form also. The concept of HIIT as we said is to increase and decrease your heart rate in repeat bouts to be able to train at intensities unsustainable for long continuous periods. An example of HIIT for resistance would be to train using supersets or circuits. These are groups of exercises structured together such as chest and back, to be able to lift more weights for longer than the usual 30 seconds. Structured correctly, each weight circuit should take at least one minute. You would then rest for a short period of 30-60 seconds before repeating the exercises at the same intensity as previously done.

HIIT is a major component to being able to lose body fat but is not the be all and end all of weight loss. HIIT is simply a tool to assist you. We all know that to lose weight the key is to be in a caloric deficit by controlling the calories in your diet.

The benefits of HIIT include but are not limited to:

- No being on the treadmill for hours on end to see results
- HIIT helps preserve muscle mass due to its anaerobic nature
- HIIT tends to mimic more real life situations where we are stop and start, not continuously moving creatures

There are also some disadvantages to HIIT training:

- Its damn hard! HIIT is not for the faint of heart and can not be performed at a half pace where one feels comfortable.
- If you are on a super low calorie diet (for some unknown ridiculous reason) then HIIT is not for you. You are likely to deplete muscle and liver glycogen rapidly and soon find yourself in a low blood sugar (hypoglycaemic) state.
- HIIT can slow down recovery. Do not perform HIIT every day. In fact, if you are doing HIIT with cardio and HIIT with resistance training, it may be beneficial to alternate days. If you are unable to do this, then ensure your HIIT cardio is completed after your resistance training session.

Much the same as any other workout, if you do the same HIIT program every day, benefits aren't going to stay around for too long. You must progress with HIIT be it cardio or resistance training. Increase the speed, increase the weights, increase the incline, increase the reps. Progress forward or you will plateau just as you would one the benefits of traditional training styles slow down with repeat attempts.

Keep it interesting by mixing up the resistance routine (different workout splits is the perfect scenario) and b alternating between bike, treadmill, cross trainer and any other cardio options available to you, including outside cardio.

Consistency and progression is the key, so be sure to record your workouts and results so that you can continuously increase your intensity and out perform yourself week in and week out.