

90 MINUTES WORTH OF CARDIO

IN 20 MINUTES!

Fitness News Brief

From: Steve Howard Fitness

Interval Training: Equal Benefits, Only Faster

The practice of interval training, -alternating short bouts of high intensity exercise with longer periods of recovery has been a mainstay among competitive athletes for years, since it replicates the brief and intense bursts of energy required in most sports. But how does it compare to standard cardio exercise for promoting muscle health to improve performance? A new study suggests that the two are essentially equal.

In the study led by Martin Gibala, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Kinesiology at McMaster University in Canada, college-age males exercised on stationary bicycles three times a week over a two-week period. One group worked out at peak intensity for 30 seconds, followed by four minutes of slow pedaling for active recovery, during a 20-minute session, the other group rode at a steady moderate pace for 90 to 120 minutes per session.

After the two weeks, researchers tested each participant's muscle tissue for an enzyme that indicates how efficiently the muscle is using oxygen. To their surprise, both groups exhibited roughly the same increase in enzyme level-around 25 to 30 percent. This suggests interval training offers the same benefits as less intense, more prolonged exercise in only a fraction of the time.

"You can think about [interval training] as being able to produce energy more efficiently, being able to go at a faster pace and exercise longer," Gibala told the Los Angeles Times. "We're still wrapping our heads around the magnitude of improvement in the interval group."

The study, "Short-Term Sprint Interval Versus Traditional Endurance Training: Similar Adaptations in Human Skeletal Muscle and Exercise Performance." Was published in the September Issue (Vol. 575 Issue 3) of the journal of Physiology. To view the full text go to: jp.physoc.org/org/content/full/575/3/901

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