

# Fat attack

The benefits of intense exercise have been supported by a series of studies conducted for more than 10 years at Laval University in Canada. These results suggest people who train intensely have more muscle and less fat than those who exercise at lower intensities. People exercising more intensely in these studies lost much more body fat, even though they exercised for less time than a moderate-intensity training group.

Researchers from Duke University led by Dr. Cris Slentz found similar results in a study published in January, 2004. This eight-month study showed that people could lose weight through exercise alone—without dieting (the average energy intake was slightly more than 2,000 calories per day). People who exercised intensely lost much more fat than those who trained moderately. However, even moderate intensity exercise caused some fat loss.

A notable exception to these findings was a study published in the prestigious *Journal of the American Medical Association* in September, 2003, by researchers from the University of Pittsburgh, led by Dr. John Jakicic. They found that exercise duration or intensity had no effect on weight loss in obese subject. Moderate exercise was just as effective as intense or long-duration exercise. The major problem with the study was that the workouts were not supervised. Many people, particularly those who are severely overweight, feel uncomfortable training intensely unless they are closely supervised. Also, the study didn't measure changes in body fat, only weight and body mass index (determines if weight is proportional to height).

You use more fat as fuel when you exercise slowly, but you lose more body fat when exercising intensely. High-intensity training, particularly when using interval training (bouts of intense exercise interrupted by rest), increases release of fat from fat cells, fat use for fuel and metabolic rate after exercise more than low- or moderate-intensity exercise, so you lose more body fat. Also, high-intensity exercise decreases appetite more than moderate or low-intensity exercises. You're interested in the bottom line: Does the program help you lose fat and make you look lean? Overwhelmingly, research studies show that intense exercise is best for losing fat.

## Losing Body Fat with High-Intensity Exercise

Train intensely, combining cardio, interval training and weight training, and you will lose weight and keep it off. Combine your program with a well-balanced diet. Do not follow a strict low-carbohydrate diet, such as the Atkins or South Beach diets. They may not provide the carbs you need to train intensely. With this program, you won't have to worry about excess carbs: You will metabolize them rapidly during exercise and then chip away at your body fat for the rest of the day. As with any exercise program, begin conservatively and progress gradually. Below are some important principles for getting the most from an intense workout program.

- **Do 60-90 minutes of cardio at 60-85 percent of maximum effort, three to five days per week.** This

will burn about 500-1,000 calories a day, which is enough to get rid of about a pound of fat per week if you train five days per week. That doesn't sound like a lot, but you will lose fat and not muscle. What's more, you will lose weight and it will stay off. Add a sensible diet to the equation and you will rid your body of excess fat before you know it.

- **Include interval training in your workout.**

Interval training includes intense running (sprinting) interrupted by periods of rest or light exercise. If training on gym equipment, such as a treadmill or elliptical trainer, exercise intensely for one minute at near-maximum intensity, rest for one minute, then repeat six to 20 times (depending on your fitness level). If training on an outdoor running track, begin by sprinting the straightaways and walking the turns. As you increase fitness, increase the distance of your sprints to 200 meters and then 400 meters. (Rest one to five minutes between sprints). You will notice rapid increases in fitness and fat loss with this kind of training.

- **Train with weights at least two days per week.**

Weight training increases muscle mass that will give you a higher metabolic rate. More muscle mass means you burn more calories during the day. Also, you'll look lean and fit if you have more muscle. Train hard!

- **Stretch after you workout, when the muscles are warm.** Maintaining flexibility will help you prevent injury and maintain normal range of motion in the joints. Stretch after exercise during the cool-down period rather than before.

- **Eat a well-balanced diet.** Your diet should contain a variety of foods. Include wholesome foods, such as fruits, vegetables, lean meats, whole grains, monounsaturated oils, nuts and fish. Avoid simple sugars and saturated and trans fats. A diet that's high in protein and fats and low in carbohydrates is not appropriate for this kind of exercise, because you need carbs to train intensely. Low-carb diets work well for people who want to lose weight but are only moderately active.

- **Back off if you get injured.** Intense training greatly increases the risk of overuse injuries. People who train intensely ride a thin edge between peak performance and injury because they push hard all the time. Back off on the program when your knees, Achilles tendons, hips, or back hurt. Take a few days off and then begin again at a lower intensity.

## Train Intensely and Lose Weight Fast

You can lose weight and look fit and healthy if you're willing to pay the price. Losing 10, 20, 30 pounds or more is no problem if you follow a few basic principles and stick with the program. More importantly, you can maintain your new weight. If you start today, one year from now there will be a new you. You will be thinner, healthier, and you will look terrific. The ball is in your court. So, promise to make fitness and diet a priority in your life and you will achieve the kind of body you want.