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The After 50 Fitness Formula Interval PlayBook

Interval options are infinite. But that can be stifling! Keep it simple to begin. Walk comfortably and walk fast or walk uphill as your intervals. Bicycle in an easy gear and then increase resistance. There are additional ideas below. Then get as creative as you want. Insert types of exercise based on your preference. Set up some options that are ready-to-go so you don't have to think when you have the moments to exercise.

Longer steady exercise should be in Zone 2 (feels like a 4-5/10) and your 30 second intervals should reach Zone 4 or 5 (feels like a 9) by the end.

This is a good interval for any level and an especially good one to start with if you're new to intervals.

- Walk or run the longer interval and use a sprint effort or incline/hill for the 30-second burst.
- Swim or water walk easy and then go as fast as you can
- Dance in your living room and then do squat jumps or high knee lifts.
- Use an elliptical, a rower or any mode you like.

The most common question I'm asked is if "this" is interval training. The answer is always... *did it get you breathless?* If not, it's not High Intensity Interval Training that will help most with improving VO₂, and therefore longevity.

Your 4:30(easy to moderate) and 00:30(hard) interval workout options:

_____ 4:30
_____ :30

_____ 4:30
_____ :30

_____ 4:30
_____ :30

_____ 4:30
_____ 30

Always perform a warmup and cool down of lighter activity for interval training sessions. Insert 4-6 intervals into your workout depending on time. A total of no more than 45 minutes per week of interval training (the hard/easy combination) will keep you under the threshold where injury rates increase.

OLD and NEW Thoughts about HIIT and Reducing Injury Rate

At one point we thought that doing longer intervals of work and short recovery was the best way to get results. Over time that interval training became more mainstream, injury rates increased by 144%.

More recent research established that doing the interval and then recovering for as long as needed to fully recover (a good gage is completely nose breathing) resulted in the same positive results. For women in midlife more prone to injury because of estrogen's effects on connective tissue, this is good news. You can reduce injury risk, be fully recovered and ready to get the high intensity interval in while most likely getting better results because you're able to work harder.

So use these initial "formulas" only as a get-started guide. Then, if you aren't recovered, wait until you are to begin again. Perform 4-6 high intensity intervals per session at most.

This type of training is called High Intensity Repeat Training or HIRT, not a great acronym!

Keep it Simple

Try any of the following to mix things up a little. Shorter, is best for women with the intention of boosting fat burn and improving VO2 max (linked to longevity).

:30 second sprint intervals

:45 second

1:00

1:30 (this is probably done easiest on a long hill)

Create a list of your own favorite activities. You'll quickly see many things can get you breathless with or without impact.

Easy

Walking

Running

Hard

Fast or Hill Walking

Sprinting or hill running

Swimming
Elliptical
Boxing drills
Hula Hoop

Fast swimming (or harder effort)
Elliptical speed or resistance
Faster boxing drills
Jump rope

Impact vs Intensity

High intensity does not have to mean high impact. If you can do high impact, you're also getting bone density and the element of power in the workout. If that's not possible, know your limits. High intensity could also include the component of agility, helping enhance reaction skills. But agility work doesn't necessarily get the heart rate high enough and HIIT doesn't always qualify as agility work. With creative planning you can do a lot in a short amount of time if energy or your schedule require that.

What about using strength and cardio intervals together?

Based on collective assessment of the research for women in midlife: doing them "bootcamp style" in the same workout is less effective than doing them consecutively or on alternating days. Both results are watered down. That is, you're not getting as good a strength workout or developing as much lean muscle mass and you're also not working at the same capacity of cardio. Just because it feels "hard" doesn't mean you're achieving the same training level.

Reach breathless and totally recover during HIIT workout.

Reach muscle fatigue or nearly reach it with strength training workouts.

You can still choose it occasionally for variety. Do so knowing it isn't the best way to optimize results. Injury rates also go up.

Notes: