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# Optimising body fat loss: which type of exercise?

**W**ith our increasingly busy lives and the established health risks associated with excess body fat, the search is on to find more efficient and effective ways to trim our waistlines.

Exercise has shown to be effective for reducing total body and abdominal fat and helps to counteract the loss of muscle tissue during dieting. Of particular importance, aerobic exercise has specific effects on reducing intra-abdominal fat stores which have been closely linked to cardiovascular and metabolic disease.

Traditionally, targeting body fat loss through exercise has been a time consuming task with long durations of lower intensity exercise recommended. Interestingly, recent evidence suggests that it may be a better investment to increase exercise intensity rather than total exercise time.

High intensity interval exercise represents a promising way to reduce body fat, improve blood glucose control and aerobic fitness in less time than conventional exercise. Interval exercise involves short bursts of high intensity exercise followed by periods of lighter exercise, repeated over a period of 20-30 minutes. The high intensity level is set relative to each individual's fitness level and is generally 80-90% of a maximum effort or a "hard" level of exertion. Depending on your fitness, this may represent a brisk walk for some and a jog or sprint for others.

During interval exercise, the constant shifting from high to low intensity produces a unique metabolic response which increases the body's fat burning capacity. Results released from the University of New South Wales earlier this year, demonstrated that overweight women lost three times more body fat and reduced their fasting insulin levels by an extra 27% performing 20 minutes of high intensity interval exercise as compared to 40 minutes of moderate intensity exercise. The high intensity exercise involved 8 seconds of sprint cycling followed by 12 seconds of light cycling for a total

of 20 minutes. Despite burning the same number of calories during exercise, a greater amount of body fat was lost with high intensity exercise.

This high intensity interval approach can be applied to many different forms of exercise such as walking, cycling and swimming with the number and intensity of intervals gradually increased. A warm-up and cool-down period of at least 5 minutes duration is recommended.

High intensity interval exercise represents an encouraging option for those aiming to optimise body fat loss and insulin sensitivity. This form of exercise may be particularly suited to the prevention and management of conditions such as the metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes.

Before considering high intensity exercise, you should build your fitness level through regular exercise of a moderate intensity. It should not be forgotten that significant health benefits can be gained from just achieving this.

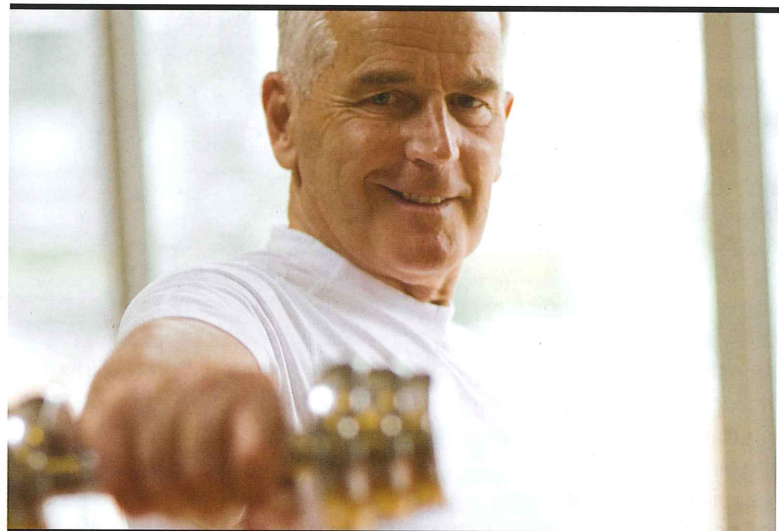
Before starting any high intensity exercise, males over 45 years, females over 55 years and those with medical conditions should consult their GP or an Exercise Physiologist. An Exercise Physiologist can help determine which exercise intensity is safe and appropriate for you and prescribe an individualised program taking into consideration your personal medical history, physical capabilities and goals.

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