

## Getting Out of the Rut with Interval Training

It's Tuesday. That means you're heading to the gym for your workout. You're going to do 30 minutes on the treadmill. At 3.8 miles per hour. At an incline of 2.5. Again. Just like you always do, and always have done. What's wrong with this? You're burning calories, right? You're improving your heart function, right? Yes, but you're not working out as effectively as possible.

Our bodies adapt very quickly, so aside from the boredom factor of doing the same thing, day after day, your body gets used to the workout. It becomes more efficient, so it's able to get through the workout without expending as much energy (i.e. calories). So even though that workout may have had you dripping in sweat five weeks ago, today, you might not even be out of breath.

In order to see results, and to progress, you need to constantly be challenging your body. This means mixing things up every once in a while...doing different exercises, changing the order of the exercises, changing the intensity. Another effective way to challenge your body is to do interval workouts every once in a while.

What exactly is interval training? When doing interval training, you are constantly altering the intensity to challenge yourself. By the time your body gets used to the workout intensity, you change it again, forcing the body to re-adjust. This leads to a large fluctuation in heart rate, forcing the heart to work harder. This also leads to a greater calorie burn than most steady-pace workouts.

So, how do you do this? It's relatively simple. You can do the same exercise mode you've been doing, or you enjoy doing. If you like the elliptical, you can do intervals on an elliptical. If you enjoy walking, you can do intervals while walking. The key is to keep altering the intensity. This can mean speeding up your walking, or upping the resistance on the elliptical. Really push yourself. Take the intensity to a level you can only handle for a minute or two, or even 15-30 seconds. Then, drop it back to a level that you're able to sustain for longer. Do this every 2-5 minutes. Constantly changing the intensity keeps the body challenged and forces it to make adaptations.

If you're new to exercise, it's not recommended that you begin with interval training. Begin your workout with steady-paced cardiovascular exercises. As you start to get comfortable with them, start adding a few short intervals to your workouts. Then, gradually increase the length and quantities of the intervals. Not only does this challenge your body and make for an effective workout, but it also makes your workouts seem to go faster.