



To HIIT or not to HIIT?

One of the most hotly debated topics in the fitness industry today is which type of cardio is best. High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) or Low Intensity Cardio (commonly referred to as “fat-burning” cardio). Before I give the pro’s and cons of doing both kinds of cardio, I’ll give a quick definition of each type.

HIIT: Cardio that should last no longer than 25 minutes in duration. Consisting of short burst of high intensity intervals (ie. 30 seconds at a Heart Rate of 85-90% Max), followed by short recovery periods (ie. 45 sec. at a Heart Rate of 75%- 80% Max)

*** If you are new to exercise or have cardiac or pulmonary issues, then this probably isn’t the right type of cardio for you***

“FAT Burn” Cardio: Cardio that typically lasts between 30-60 minutes in duration. Consisting of low to moderate intensity activity for the entire duration (ie. a 45 minute walk at HR of 75% Max)

Here are the pro’s and con’s of each:

HIIT:

Pro’s

- burn more calories minute for minute
- greater fitness benefits (heart and lung health)
- elevated metabolism for hours after the HIIT session
- Elevated resting fat oxidation levels –meaning, you actually burn a higher percentage of fat at rest
- Takes less time, and is less “boring
- Short duration (ie. as little as 12 min.) allows you to perform it after weight training workouts if you desire

Con's

- requires 48 hr. recovery time
- the calories you burn DURING the workout come almost exclusively from carbohydrates
- Can result in muscle loss if you perform the HIIT session for too long (more than 25 min.) and/or if you haven't eaten enough prior to the session

“FAT BURN CARDIO”:

Pros

- burn much higher percentage of fat DURING the cardio session when compared to HIIT training
- muscle sparing - less likely to burn muscle tissue than HIIT training
- Relatively easy and mindless
- Short recovery time (ie. you could do it everyday)

Cons

- Doesn't have a drastic effect on your metabolism and/or fitness level
- Burns much fewer calories per minute
- Long duration means you can't add it on at the end of a weight training workout, unless your goal is to lose muscle mass

Ultimately, there are benefits to doing each type of cardio. If your fitness and health levels allow you to do so, I suggest doing 2 HIIT sessions for every one “FAT BURN” session. So if you are doing cardio 3 times per week you could do HIIT training on Monday and Saturday, and Fat Burn cardio on Wednesday. The schedule can be tailored towards your goals and needs, so if you need any advice on how to properly plan your cardio split, just ask!

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