

A full-page photograph of a muscular man in a gym, performing a squat with a barbell. He is shirtless, wearing blue shorts and red sneakers. The barbell is positioned across his upper back, and he is in a deep squat position. The background shows gym equipment and a window with orange curtains.

TRAINING

One of the greatest debates in the health and fitness industry is the one that aims to answer the question, what is the most powerful and effective fat burning workout?

If that's not your main aim though, and you just want to ensure you aren't wasting your time with things that don't work, or you only have time for 2-3 sessions a week and want to maximise your time, what type of workout should you be doing?

With scientific findings coming out regularly about how the body responds to various exercise protocols we know more today than ever before about how to properly structure a fat-burning programme.

It wasn't always like that though. Over the last few decades the commonly held beliefs with regard to the optimal workouts for fat loss have evolved, but before we present you with what many top fitness professionals in the industry now consider to be the most powerful fat-burning workout out there, let's have a look at the evolution of this concept...

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE FAT BURNING WORKOUTS

» By Peter Carvell, founder of www.sixpackfactory.com

HIGH INTENSITY WEIGHT TRAINING

THE FAT BURNING ZONE

The first big trend was steady state cardio, which was touted as the best means to tap into stored fat as your heart rate never rose above the optimal range where fat is burnt more efficiently – the so-called ‘fat burning zone’... and it’s true. At lower exercise intensities you will demonstrate a lower RQ (respiratory quotient), which is the prime indicator the body is relying more on fatty acids than glucose.

The problem, however, was that to burn any significant amount of calories, hours of exercise had to be performed. With busy lifestyles and gym boredom running high, people just didn’t stick to their workout routines.

On top of that, steady state cardio didn’t deliver any extra benefits, other than relative improvements to cardiovascular fitness. There is no hormonal response or any appreciable increase to your metabolic rate following steady state cardio.

SHORTER, MORE INTENSE WORKOUTS

As more research into the subject emerged thinking slowly shifted, as it was found that the slow and steady approach wasn’t the ideal route to a chiselled body, as it was previously thought. At this point researchers started looking at more intense protocols, alternating between intense bouts of exercise with active rest periods – otherwise known as high intensity interval training (HIIT).

The premise? As you exercise so intensely the total amount of calories you burn per minute will go up, but, more importantly, you’ll also continue to burn calories for hours following the workout due to the metabolic disturbance this type of training creates.

Based on the physiological response during a HIIT workout you’ll burn more glucose than fatty acids, but after the workout your body’s elevated metabolic rate will predominantly utilise body fat as a source of fuel. This makes any form of HIIT a very powerful form of exercise.

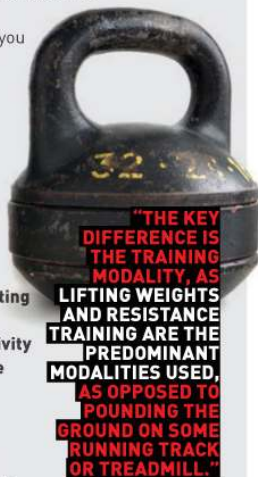
Looking at it solely from a cardio exercise perspective, this is the best type of workout you can do, with protocols like Tabata becoming extremely popular of late due to the many benefits it offers.

THE NEXT EVOLUTION

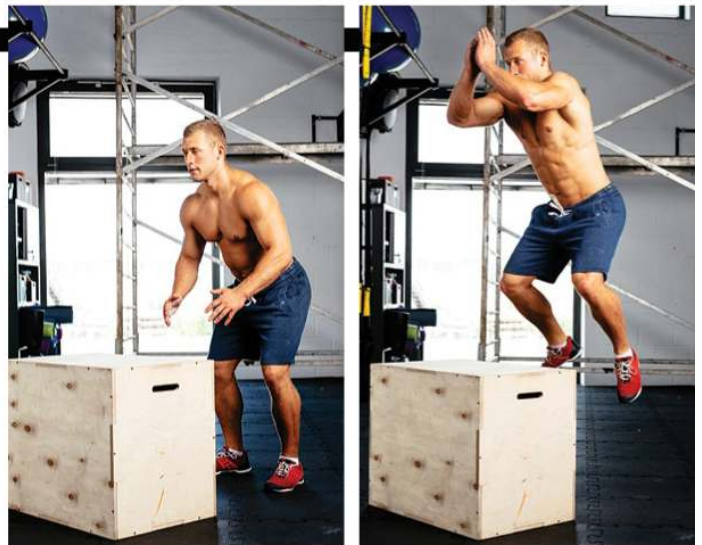
However, while they’re extremely effective, these HIIT cardio workouts aren’t the best option when it comes to getting optimal results. The fact that they require running, cycling or some other aerobic activity does little to preserve or build lean muscle mass. So, while subjects may be getting smaller, they aren’t looking any better.

And that’s where high intensity weight training (HIWT) comes in. The structure of a HIWT workout is very similar to a normal HIIT routine, and in many of the protocols you will also perform a mixture of high and low intensity intervals. The key difference is the training modality, as lifting weights and resistance training are the predominant modalities used, as opposed to pounding the ground on some running track or treadmill.

In addition, HIWT is not only going to provide the benefit of a high calorie burn during the workout, and after (which is also a significant benefit of HIIT), but it’s also going to help shape and define your body.



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HOW HIWT WORKS

Just two issues ago, we published an article and workout on metabolic conditioning or metcon training. In short, HIWT workouts are basically the best type of metcon training you can do.

THE BASIC BENEFITS OF THIS TYPE OF TRAINING INCLUDE:

INCREASED FITNESS: When you perform these intense bouts of strength-based training you’re going to dramatically elevate your heart rate, keeping it there for the duration of the session. Even with the active rest periods you can still expect to experience that elevation. This provides you with cardiovascular benefits, without the need for all that cardio.

BUILDS MUSCLE: When performing intense interval strength training, as opposed to cardio exercises, you’re going to reach a far higher level of overall muscular fatigue. This, in turn, helps to signal protein synthesis to begin repairing those broken down muscle fibres, building them back stronger and (if a calorie surplus is provided), larger.

HEIGHTENED METABOLIC DISTURBANCE (AFTER BURN EFFECT): With this increased level of muscle fatigue comes a much higher repair response. That means your body will require an even greater number of calories during the post-workout period as it works to return itself to a state of homeostasis, which requires more energy following a strength training workout than a cardio session [Dolezal, Brett Andrew, et al. Muscle damage and resting metabolic rate after

acute resistance exercise with an eccentric overload. Diss. University of Kansas, Health, Sport, and Exercise Sciences, 1998.]

IMPROVED HEALTH: All of this high intensity work is going to deplete your muscle’s supply of glycogen (stored glucose), making you more insulin sensitive after the workout is over. This delivers added health benefits, as it keeps you leaner in the long run, and helps to ward off the development of diabetes and various other conditions associated with metabolic syndrome.

HEIGHTENED HORMONE RESPONSE: Much like HIIT sprints, HIWT will elicit a much greater release of human growth hormone (hGH) than any of the other workouts. This can help reduce signs of ageing, while improving your body composition by increasing muscle mass and decreasing fat mass.

READ MORE ABOUT THE POWER THAT BOOSTING ANABOLIC HORMONE PRODUCTION NATURALLY CAN HAVE ON YOUR BODY AND HEALTH ON PG 68

