

In this issue our women's fitness specialist, Kathleen Stewart guides us through a series of cutting edge cardio workouts



## The secret's in the afterburn

Welcome to Fitness Matters. I'm now turning my attention to cardiovascular training, or "cardio" as it's commonly known. Women love cardio training and in our quest for weight loss, fat loss, fitness and the feel good factor, thousands of us take part in aerobics and dance fitness classes. Women in their 40s and 50s will remember Jane Fonda's Workout videos, it's a natural choice.

This type of cardio training tends to be of long duration (45-60 minutes at least) and low-moderate intensity (60%-80% of maximum heart rate, depending on fitness level). I've known women who spend up to three hours a day in the gym on the treadmill, cross trainer and recumbent bike in an attempt to lose weight.

But is this really the best way to banish body fat and get great results? The scientific evidence suggests not. Even worse, boredom starts to set in and the risk of injury increases.

While weight loss may occur in the early stages of such a training plan, it will quickly plateau. When this happens, frustration sets in and even more cardio work is undertaken. Sadly, this strategy is doomed to fail, as excessive amounts of long, slow cardio will ultimately lead to loss of lean muscle tissue and body fat gain. This is not the desired outcome for women undergoing menopausal transition who are struggling with changing

body shapes and increases in body fat. And in an era when most of us are juggling the demands of work and family and time is at a premium, there must be another way.

So what's the solution? High intensity interval training (HIIT). Previously the preserve of athletes, this training technique has filtered down to mainstream fitness and given rise to a new breed of "metabolic" workouts. HIIT takes many guises, from sprinting and skipping to plyometric drills involving jumping and hopping, the principles remain the same.

HIIT workouts comprise a series of work and rest or recovery intervals. A short, intense burst of activity is followed by an active recovery period and the sequence repeated several times. The beauty of HIIT is that the ratio of work to rest intervals can be "tweaked" to suit participants of varying fitness levels and progressed as fitness improves.

For example, 20:60s, 30:60s, 30:30s. This is in stark contrast to traditional cardio training where most women simply increase the duration of their workouts with little regard for intensity. With HIIT, less is definitely more and you can get a fantastic workout in as little as 10 minutes.

But how can such a short workout burn more calories than 45 minutes on the treadmill? The secret lies in the "afterburn effect" in which our metabolism is higher for many



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hours post-workout, as our bodies recover from the intense exercise bout. For example, a 10k moderate intensity run may yield an afterburn effect for eight hours, compared to at least 24 hours after a shorter sprint session. As well as supercharging your cardio fitness levels, HIIT is also a

great way to boost bone density, even in post-menopausal women and can help reduce the risks of osteopenia and osteoporosis in later life.

I've devised a simple workout for you using three-dimensional jump squats. Here is the protocol:

Jump forward x 2 then back x



2



2, returning to start position.

Jump wide, feet turned out then jump back to start, bringing feet together.

Jump right and make a quarter turn (90 degrees), return to start. Repeat to left.

Repeat 3 - 5 times, depending on the work and recovery intervals chosen. You must

give each work interval 100% effort for maximum effect. HIIT is not easy and you'll feel out of breath at the end of each work interval. During recovery intervals, march on the spot or walk around the room, or even try some basic "aerobics" moves like step touch or grapevine. Experiment with the work and recovery intervals I mentioned earlier and tweak according to your fitness level.

Once you get used to HIIT you must, like any training programme, progress the workout. There are two ways to do this: increase the work interval or decrease the recovery interval but not at the same time. Gradual progression is key.

You can download my free Warm up and Cool down video from [www.katsfitness.co.uk](http://www.katsfitness.co.uk) If you enjoyed this workout and want to try some different HIIT formats, my Bodys shock workouts can be downloaded and done at home.

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Modern mind body fitness (balance, co-ordination, conditioning).

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