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Good Health

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express workouts

WANT BETTER FAT-BURNING RESULTS IN LESS TIME? READ ON FOR ONE METHOD YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO TURN YOUR BACK ON, WRITES DONNA JONES

For many of us there never seems to be enough time in the day, and exercise is often the last thing we think of doing when we have a few precious free moments. Often, we think a workout will take up too much time, so we ditch our fitness goals yet again. But, the emergence of the short workout promises to change all that.



Several studies have revealed that you can get the same, if not better, results doing short sessions of interval training. And adding further weight to this claim are gyms which are now offering express 30-minute circuits.

To learn more about shorter workouts that don't compromise fitness levels – or might even improve them – we have consulted two exercise experts, associate professor Steve Boutcher, researcher on the University of New South Wales (UNSW) sprint interval study, and former personal trainer Ben Nowlan who now partly owns the company Yellowtroupe – corporate health provider.

THE EXPERTS EXPLAIN

Q Let's get straight to it: Can you really get the same results in less time?

Steve Boutcher SB Based on our studies, we've found that we actually do achieve better results in less time – more fat loss, greater change in insulin sensitivity, and a reduction in low-grade inflammation.

Q What's the best way to work out if you only have a short period of time?

SB Interval training.

Q What is interval training?

Ben Nowlan BN Alternating between periods of higher intensity activity and recovery periods.

Q Does the short workout only work with interval training?

SB There's something about short interval training that reduces fat. Short or long aerobic workouts that are carried out without variations in intensity levels don't result in much fat loss.

Q If you opt for a short workout, how often should you do it?

SB Our published research shows that three times per ►

week was effective for reducing fat and increasing insulin sensitivity. It follows that four or five sessions per week is likely to be more effective. I also recommend two to three resistance workouts on alternate days.

Q What's the best way to lift weights when you're doing a shorter workout?

BN Choose a multi-joint exercise, such as a chest press, instead of an isolation exercise, such as a bicep curl, because you are working more muscles at once. And, super-set your exercises – which involves doing back-to-back sets of a different exercise for the same muscle group, such as lunges followed by leg

presses, to fatigue the muscles quicker.

Q Can you skip stretching, warm ups and cool downs?

BN It's always necessary to warm up and cool down, but stretching is only necessary at the end of your workout to prevent post-workout muscle soreness and injury.

Q Is it possible to fit in an effective lunchtime workout and be back at your desk within the hour?

SB Definitely. With a warm up, 20-minute interval workout, cool down as well as a shower afterwards, you'll easily be sitting back at your desk before your lunch hour is up.



EXERCISE EXPRESS: How to do a 20-minute interval workout

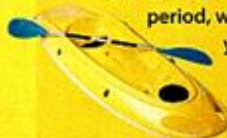
The UNSW interval-workout study inspired the creation of LifeSprints – a 20-minute interval circuit that is now used widely by personal trainers. "LifeSprints has among the highest fat-loss results," says Boutcher.

TO DO IT

1 Include walking, running, skipping, rowing, cycling, stair climbing or punch boxing as part of your circuit.



2 Do four different five-minute bouts of activity – such as running, skipping, cycling, punch boxing and stair climbing – alternating between eight seconds, when you perform the activity as fast as you can, followed by a 12-second recovery period, when you go as slow as you can.



3 Warm up and cool down with five minutes of light activity, and finish with stretching. Unfit people should start gradually and aim for 10 minutes of the LifeSprints interval circuit per session for the first two weeks, and build up to the full 20 minutes from there.



If you're in doubt about being able to exercise at high intensities, check with your doctor and seek the help of an accredited exercise physiologist. To find one, visit the Australian Association for Exercise and Sports Science at www.aaess.com.au.

A LifeSprints circuit can be done to specially designed music, which can be purchased from www.musicandmotion.com.au.

