LIFESTYLE CHANGE

If you are looking to lose some weight after the summer holidays, add more protein to your plate and reduce your carb intake. This change can make a big impact quickly.

FITNESS TIP

Even if your training is just a walk, you can adapt it to add some sort of incline, you will be surprised how quickly your muscle and aerobic strength improves.

David Fairlamb
THE FIT FACTOR

Don't miss David's tips every Saturday in your Journal

INTERVAL training is a very effective workout technique that can improve strength, endurance, speed, and overall fitness for individuals of all ages.

This form of exercise alternates between short bursts of high intensity activity and periods of lower intensity or rest, which challenges the body in unique ways. Whether you're running, cycling, or lifting weights, interval training pushes your physical limits, providing significant benefits for multiple aspects of fitness.

Strength

One of the main advantages of interval training is its ability to enhance muscle strength. During high intensity bursts, such as hill sprints or resistance based intervals like kettlebell swings, muscles are pushed to their limit.

These bursts place a heavy load on the muscles, promoting strength gains by recruiting a higher number of muscle fibres. For example, in hill training, the incline increases the resistance against which your muscles must work, especially the tops of the legs front and back plus your calves.

This not only builds muscle strength but also improves the muscles' ability to generate power quickly, which is vital for activities like sprinting or jumping.

Endurance

Interval training is also a great way to improve endurance. By alternating between intense efforts and recovery, the body learns to recover more efficiently.

Over time, your heart and lungs become better conditioned, allowing you to sustain high levels of activity for longer periods eg performing sprint intervals where you run for 30 seconds at maximum effort followed by 1-2 minutes of walking or jogging helps your cardiovascular system adapt to high demands. This challenges the body to process oxygen more effectively, which translates into better endurance in both aerobic and anaerobic activities.

Speed

Sprint intervals are particularly useful in this regard, as they push your body to move at its fastest. When performing sprints, the body uses fast twitch muscle fibers, which are responsible for explosive movements.

Over time, this helps improve your speed, as well as your ability to maintain higher speeds over longer distances.

Interval training forces the body to adapt to these fast efforts, leading to improved running or cycling speed, as well as agility in sports that require quick bursts of movement, such as rugby or football.

Improves overall fitness

The combination of strength, endurance, and speed improvements from interval training results in enhanced overall fitness.

By engaging in aerobic and anaerobic energy systems, interval training ensures that your body becomes more efficient at switching between them.

> Interval training on an air bike

This is particularly beneficial for many sports that require short bursts of high energy followed by less intense periods. Additionally, this form of training tends to burn more calories compared to steady cardio work, aiding in fat loss and muscle preservation, which are key factors in overall fitness.

Benefits at any age

Interval training is that it can be adapted to any fitness level and age group. As we age, our cardiovascular health, muscle mass, and metabolism tend to decline.

Interval training combats these issues by improving heart health, maintaining or even increasing muscle mass, and boosting our metabolism rate eg older adults can perform low impact interval exercises like cycling or swimming intervals to avoid joint strain while still gaining cardiovascular and strength benefits.

Interval training is a versatile and highly effective method for improving strength, endurance, speed, and overall fitness. Whether you're running up hills, performing sprints, or incorporating resistance exercises, this training method challenges the body in unique and powerful ways.