

Join the HIIT Craze

Try the workout that continues to increase in popularity

In the world of fitness, HIIT is all the hype. Short for high-intensity interval training, HIIT workouts require more effort through quick, intense bursts of exercise. This is followed by short, sometimes active, recovery periods.

Why is this workout becoming so popular? Because there are big health benefits. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, HIIT training has been shown to improve overall fitness levels, as well as blood pressure, cardiovascular health, insulin sensitivity and cholesterol levels. Plus, you'll build lean muscle while burning fat.

Here's how it works:

- **The fast-paced workout periods ranged from 5 seconds to 8 minutes long**, and are performed at 80–90 percent of a person's estimated maximum heart rate. This is the maximum number of times your heart will beat in a minute without overexerting yourself.
- **The recovery periods may last equally as long as the workout periods**, and are performed at 40–50 percent of a person's estimated maximum heart rate.
- **The workout continues with the alternative work and recovery periods.**

Here are some tips to get started:

- Start with a 5–10 minute warmup
- Do a HIIT workout two or three times per week. Alternate with moderate exercise. For example, throw in a 45 minute walk.
- Use pre-programmed workouts.
- Enroll in a HIIT class or boot camp.

Don't be intimidated by HIIT. With interval training, you'll burn fat, even after you've left the gym. These shorter workouts make it easier to fit exercise in your busy schedule and you don't even need equipment. You can get an effective HIIT workout by using your own body weight.

For more HIIT workout ideas, visit Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield's Blue Magazine at Wellmark.com/Blue.