I Did HIIT Every Day for 30 Days… Here's What Happened Transcript

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The 30-day experiment

If we know that If we know that interval interval interval training is one of the training is one of the fastest and fastest and most effective most effective most effective ways to improve ways to improve cardiovascular cardiovascular cardiovascular fitness, shouldn't we be fitness, shouldn't we be doing it more often? And doing it more often? And if we also know if we also know that interval that interval training is one training is one of the best of the best ways to speed up ways to speed up fat burning in fat burning in minimal minimal minimal time, shouldn't we time, shouldn't we all be doing it? I all be doing it? I tried tried tried interval interval interval training for training for 30 days, and here are the 30 days, and here are the results I got.

results I got. Hi, I'm Debra Hi, I'm Debra Atkinson, founder of Atkinson, founder of Living 50. I'm 62 years old and have been a strength strength and conditioning coach for 42 years and conditioning coach for 42 years. I. I taught at the taught at the university in the university in the kinesiology department kinesiology department and trained trainers all over the and trained trainers all over the world. I know a little world. I know a little about science, about science, so you have to so you have to ask: am ask: am I crazy? Why I crazy? Why do do do interval interval interval training for 30 days training for 30 days in a row? So before in a row?

Cardiovascular health

So before we move on we move on to discussing the to discussing the pros, cons, and what pros, cons, and what worked and worked and what didn't. I want to what didn't. I want to define define cardiovascular fitness, because that's what interval interval training is aimed at. On your training is aimed at. On your cardiovascular cardiovascular cardiovascular system and, system and, indirectly, on your indirectly, on your body composition, because body composition, because they are very connected.

We know that even in postmenopausal women who postmenopausal women who have been tested, high-intensity, high-intensity interval interval interval training has a positive training has a positive effect on effect on visceral fat. By visceral fat. By visceral, we visceral, we don't mean something don't mean something we can pinch with we can pinch with our fingers, but the our fingers, but the internal fat in the internal fat in the abdominal cavity.

So, when the stomach So, when the stomach seems tight and seems tight and hard, it is the fat hard, it is the fat around the organs that becomes around the organs that becomes dangerous to dangerous to health. We can health. We can easily accumulate easily accumulate visceral fat visceral fat after menopause after menopause due to the decline in due to the decline in estrogen levels that estrogen levels that previously protected us previously protected us from depositing it from depositing it there. Therefore, it is important there. Therefore, it is important to assess overall to assess overall health and health and cardiovascular cardiovascular cardiovascular fitness when we fitness when we consider consider consider interval interval interval training and training and the reasons for its the reasons for its feasibility.

feasibility. I hope you and I are I hope you and I are thinking in the thinking in the same direction now. But same direction now. But why did I even why did I even want to do want to do interval interval interval training for 30 days training for 30 days in a row? Because in a row?

Training methodology

Because sprint sprint sprint intervals on the intervals on the treadmill, which is exactly what treadmill, which is exactly what I did, are I did, are higher intensity and higher intensity and create a lot of create a lot of stress, stress, stress, at least during the at least during the run. And any run. And any high intensity high intensity should be accompanied by should be accompanied by proper proper proper recovery—if recovery—if recovery—if you've been with me long enough, you you've been with me long enough, you know that's true.

know that's true. We don't need We don't need too much high too much high intensity. We intensity. We need a small need a small amount of it and a lot of amount of it and a lot of recovery around recovery around it. This is the perfect it. This is the perfect ratio. So, ratio. So, 30 consecutive days of 30 consecutive days of high-intensity high-intensity high-intensity interval interval interval training must training must have a reason. My have a reason. My reason was winter, reason was winter, cold and snow, and also the fact cold and snow, and also the fact that I was used to 6 years that I was used to 6 years in a row in in a row in Scottsdale, where Scottsdale, where 15 degrees Celsius was considered cold 15 degrees Celsius was considered cold. Right now. Right now I have I have sub-zero temperatures, freezing sub-zero temperatures, freezing winds, piles of snow and winds, piles of snow and ice. No, thank you. So ice. No, thank you. So my time outside my time outside has decreased from 30–60 has decreased from 30–60 minutes, and sometimes minutes, and sometimes longer, because I have a longer, because I have a dog that I walk with dog that I walk with and I walk a lot. Two is a substitution for is a substitution for high-intensity high-intensity high-intensity intervals, because I knew intervals, because I knew I needed to I needed to walk, to move, walk, to move, especially for especially for brain health. So I replaced brain health. So I replaced that with 20 minutes of that with 20 minutes of interval interval interval training. But training. But it's actually only 2 and it's actually only 2 and a half minutes of a half minutes of intense breathing, because I bring myself to the point of, because I bring myself to the point of breathlessness on average breathlessness on average five times, five times, four to six, for four to six, for 30 seconds or less. 5 30 seconds or less. 5 times for 30 seconds, and times for 30 seconds, and if we do it if we do it regularly, every day, regularly, every day, for example, two and a for example, two and a half minutes of half minutes of high-intensity high-intensity high-intensity training, I don't give training, I don't give my body— joints, ligaments, joints, ligaments, muscles—time to muscles—time to recover. There are also recover. There are also processes of recovery of the processes of recovery of the circulatory and circulatory and respiratory systems that respiratory systems that occur when you breathe hard and fast, forcing breathe hard and fast, forcing the body to speed up the body to speed up circulation. So, did circulation. So, did my fitness level get better at the end of better at the end of the month, or worse, or did it the month, or worse, or did it stay the same stay the same? What do you think?

? What do you think? Answer this and I'll tell you and I'll tell you right now. Without right now.

Results and analysis

Without intrigue. Here are the cons of intrigue. Here are the cons of this month of mine. Nothing happened. So, literally So, literally nothing. My fitness level and productivity have not and productivity have not increased. On the plus side, they haven't decreased. And they haven't decreased. And if you if you overtrain, you overtrain, you may notice that may notice that your exercise capacity your exercise capacity decreases, and this is a decreases, and this is a warning sign. This is a warning sign. This is a red flag red flag if you are a trainer if you are a trainer working with a client or working with a client or athlete. In my athlete. In my case, if case, if productivity productivity productivity has decreased, I need to has decreased, I need to look at whether look at whether I'm eating enough, I'm eating enough, sleeping enough, and getting sleeping enough, and getting enough rest enough rest or recovery between or recovery between sessions. We don't sessions. We don't necessarily necessarily necessarily look at whether look at whether you're not you're not putting in enough effort during putting in enough effort during training. So it's about training. So it's about other other other factors. Apparently, factors. Apparently, the recovery was the recovery was not sufficient to not sufficient to contribute to improving contribute to improving my fitness level my fitness level. I. I had no recovery. This is had no recovery. This is true to a certain extent.

Recovery wouldn't Recovery wouldn't happen even happen even if I were on the treadmill some days and on the bike, on the bike, stepper, or rowing stepper, or rowing machine on others. Even machine on others. Even by changing the activity, by changing the activity, I would be changing the overall I would be changing the overall load on my load on my body. So you body. So you understand that daily understand that daily high-intensity high-intensity high-intensity interval interval interval training is training is probably not the best probably not the best goal. But the way goal. But the way to know that what to know that what you're doing isn't you're doing isn't perfect is by not making perfect is by not making progress progress. So my. So my stable stable stable metrics were metrics were speed and/or speed and/or incline. So, I want to be out incline. So, I want to be out of breath in 30 of breath in 30 seconds or less. The seconds or less. The average speed average speed to catch your breath during this to catch your breath during this time is 14.5 km/ h. She hasn't grown. And h. She hasn't grown. And it hasn't diminished.

it hasn't diminished. Some days were Some days were harder than others, but the harder than others, but the score didn't improve at all score didn't improve at all. So, we would. So, we would think that if think that if more means better, more means better, then I should improve the then I should improve the outcome. But I didn't outcome. But I didn't improve.

improve. improve. I I I always set the incline of the treadmill to always set the incline of the treadmill to 0.5, wherever I am. Or 0.5, wherever I am. Or by 1 if the minimum by 1 if the minimum level is not 0.5. So, that has level is not 0.5. So, that has n't changed either.

n't changed either. No increase in No increase in slope. It took the same amount of time for me to catch my breath each time. Sometimes it would breath each time. Sometimes it would happen a little happen a little faster, indicating faster, indicating that I was that I was getting tired, not getting tired, not recovering, recovering, recovering, perhaps not getting enough perhaps not getting enough sleep, or a little sleep, or a little dehydrated. All of these dehydrated. All of these factors affect factors affect your recovery. So your recovery. So no progress in no progress in my my my performance.

performance. performance. I am not I am not participating in any participating in any races right now. I don't races right now. I don't need or need or want to run want to run sprints. But we're sprints. But we're looking for ways looking for ways to determine, "Is to determine, "Is your fitness level increasing your fitness level increasing?"?"?" And such And such tools are tools are speed and/or resistance. If you. If you are using are using are using an exercise bike and an exercise bike and sprinting, the sprinting, the resistance or the number of resistance or the number of pedal revolutions per pedal revolutions per minute (RPM) is what the bike is measuring. You would bike is measuring. You would see changes if you see changes if you increased your increased your fitness level fitness level. Remember. Remember this. There are no improvements.

this. There are no improvements. But the plus side is that I did But the plus side is that I did n't roll n't roll back either. So, something back either. So, something was working well. And was working well.

Pros and tradeoffs

And now another moment. Winter, what's happening? If you live in a? If you live in a northern climate, northern climate, you already know this. You're you already know this. You're probably probably probably less active indoors, more likely less active indoors, more likely to find yourself near to find yourself near the fridge and the fridge and pantry, a time of cozy pantry, a time of cozy comfort, but I didn't comfort, but I didn't gain weight or gain weight or accumulate fat. My accumulate fat. My body composition remained the same body composition remained the same, as did my weight. This is a plus. So, no. This is a plus. So, no improvement in improvement in visceral visceral visceral belly fat, total belly fat, total fat, or body weight, but fat, or body weight, but I didn't gain any weight either.

This is a positive point. And instead of 60 minutes of And instead of 60 minutes of activity, at a activity, at a minimum, in the form of minimum, in the form of walking outside, walking outside, I replaced that with 30 I replaced that with 30 minutes: 10 minutes minutes: 10 minutes outside and 20 on the outside and 20 on the treadmill, treadmill, treadmill, including a warm-up, including a warm-up, cool-down, and cool-down, and rest between rest between intervals. This is a intervals. This is a pretty good pretty good exchange with an unchanged exchange with an unchanged level of physical level of physical fitness and fitness and no no no negative changes in negative changes in body composition, which body composition, which proves that it was a proves that it was a good exchange good exchange even for a long even for a long period. If you period. If you find yourself in a situation find yourself in a situation where you have less time, where you have less time, you may have less you may have less energy. Although this energy. Although this requires higher requires higher energy levels energy levels for a very for a very short time, you short time, you may find that it is a may find that it is a beneficial trade-off for beneficial trade-off for you. So, would you. So, would I recommend you I recommend you do this for 30 days do this for 30 days in a row? Absolutely in a row? Absolutely not. Would not.

Optimizing future training

Would I recommend doing it I recommend doing it again? No, definitely again? No, definitely not. So, of course, it's not not. So, of course, it's not ideal. But here's ideal. But here's something else I want something else I want to say about what's to say about what's happening right happening right now. It's the end of now. It's the end of summer. I do this with summer. I do this with moderate frequency, moderate frequency, two to three times a two to three times a week. I do week. I do interval interval interval training on the training on the treadmill. Over treadmill. Over the past 4 weeks, I the past 4 weeks, I have increased my have increased my average speed from 9.0 mph to 9.6 mph to mph to 9.6 mph to reach breathlessness in 30 reach breathlessness in 30 seconds or less. I seconds or less. I also changed the need also changed the need for tilt. So, instead of for tilt. So, instead of 0.5, I need 1 or 0.5, I need 1 or 2% combined with 2% combined with speed to speed to get my get my heart rate up heart rate up to breathlessness for 30 to breathlessness for 30 seconds. This is proof that seconds. This is proof that my fitness level is improving. Another improving. Another indicator is that indicator is that my recovery time my recovery time between intervals, when between intervals, when I'm ready because I'm I'm ready because I'm breathing exclusively through my nose again breathing exclusively through my nose again after walking very slowly after walking very slowly, has not increased. So, I don't. So, I don't have to work have to work harder, and at the same time, I don't harder, and at the same time, I don't need more time need more time to recover, which is a to recover, which is a sign of sign of my my my fitness growth. If fitness growth. If you're at home and want you're at home and want to know if to know if your your your interval interval interval training is really working?

Regularly, perhaps Regularly, perhaps once a month if you're once a month if you're new, or once a new, or once a quarter if you're more quarter if you're more experienced, do experienced, do interval checks to see the to see the result. What was result. What was your your your heart rate at the highest heart rate at the highest point you point you reached? And after 1 reached? And after 1 minute, what is your minute, what is your heart heart heart rate? The difference rate? The difference between the highest between the highest score and full score and full recovery after one recovery after one minute should minute should be 20 be 20 beats or more. And the beats or more. And the bigger this difference, bigger this difference, the better. But keep an eye the better. But keep an eye on this number.

on this number.

Fitness tracking methods

Go back to Go back to this test again and this test again and again, even if again, even if you have 20 or more, you have 20 or more, keep keep keep checking. Another checking. Another way is to find a way is to find a treadmill, treadmill, treadmill, preferably indoors preferably indoors or outdoors, go out or outdoors, go out onto the same track, and onto the same track, and complete the 1-mile test.

So, you should So, you should warm up well, warm up well, walk a little before walk a little before that, start the test and that, start the test and timer, and after you timer, and after you cover exactly one cover exactly one mile, record the time, mile, record the time, how long did it how long did it take you? And for take you? And for additional reporting, additional reporting, record your record your pulse at this moment.

pulse at this moment. Repeat this, Repeat this, monthly for monthly for beginners or beginners or quarterly if you are quarterly if you are more experienced. This more experienced. This will give you an understanding of will give you an understanding of whether your whether your workouts are really working?

Is it getting results, Is it getting results, or maybe it's or maybe it's time to adjust time to adjust the program for better the program for better progress.

progress. Cardiovascular endurance Cardiovascular endurance and leg strength are among the and leg strength are among the most important most important most important fitness indicators fitness indicators for longevity. And for longevity. And if you really want to if you really want to improve your body composition, improve your body composition, both of these factors are both of these factors are critical for critical for every woman after 40.

It's important. It's important. See you on the other See you on the other side.