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Media Release – Steady State Training vs HIIT

From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



It's the Battle of the Training Modes Steady State Training or High Intensity Training? Which is Best?

It doesn't seem long ago that the exercise message was all about getting your heart rate up, and keeping it up for an extended period. In recent times the move has been more towards short fast workouts, where these slower burn workouts seem to be becoming more popular- so which is best?

High intensity interval training (HIIT) is simply alternating between higher intensity bursts of exercise with time to rest in between, with the bursts generally being less than 2 minutes.

Steady state training involves exercising more consistently, for a longer period of time.

Recently, there has been a focus on the benefits of HIIT; the shorter bursts mean an exerciser can work harder as they don't need to sustain the effort for as long. HIIT sessions also tend to be shorter overall so are helpful for the time poor. Research has backed up this popularity, with benefits of this style of training showing some great health and fitness results.

You may be forgiven for thinking that as HIIT has shown such effectiveness, that steady state training is not ideal for getting results. When it comes to exercise, it turns out that not only is steady state training just as effective for a big range of health improvements, it is also better, and safer than higher intensity options for a range of exercisers - and not just for those who are older or less active. The key is that just because high intensity has benefits, it doesn't mean lower intensity workouts have fewer benefits.

The case for HIIT

The high intensity by nature means HIIT workouts can be shorter, making it perfect for the time poor. The short bursts of work mean that an exerciser can work at a higher rate, as they do not have to maintain the effort.

The case for steady state

For heart strengthening, and feel good enhancing benefits, low intensity steady state workouts are just as effective as HIIT. It's also less intimidating for those who are intimidated by harder exercise.

The case for both?

So, which is best? The answer is either; depending on your circumstances, current condition, and preferences.

For those who like to go hard, and get their workout done quickly, then high intensity is the way to go. But for those who like to enjoy the 'scenery', then steady state may be a better option.

Beware though; the benefits of exercise require progressive overload, so doing the same steady state workout will improve your fitness initially, but after a period of time the body adapts, so a session will need to be longer, or harder, to get more improvements.

For the average exerciser, variety is the spice of life, and most people will end up engaging in both HIIT and steady state training.

What hasn't changed is that whatever exercise style you undertake, it is important you do it with guidance from an exercise professional who is qualified and experienced to provide safe and effective exercise advice to you.

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NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "warrant of fitness check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

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