



Exercise for Fat Loss – Part 2

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In part I of this article, I discussed the common misconception that slow steady state exercise is an effective method for fat loss. The ineffectiveness of this training method for fat loss is backed up by extensive research, which I also discussed in the previous article. Now I am going to cover the proper way of structuring an exercise program to maximize positive changes in body composition. I concluded the previous article by referring to two highly effective components of a fat loss program that will guarantee success. The two components are strength training and interval training.

Strength Training

Participating in a properly designed strength training program is fundamental to making any physical improvements. Improved total body strength will have positive effects on endurance, speed, power, mobility, and body composition while reducing the chance of injury. The contribution of strength training to fat loss is twofold and is based on increasing your metabolism or the amount of calories burned. The immediate effect of a strength training session is an elevated metabolism over the next 24 hour period with a greater percentage of fat being burned than normal. This is largely due to the recovery process your body goes through because of muscle tissue damage and the subsequent rebuilding process. The second major contribution of strength training is more long term and involves increasing muscle tissue or at the very least maintaining muscle tissue. The number of calories burned in a day is largely determined by how much muscle mass you have. A greater amount of muscle mass requires a greater amount of food to be consumed. This is a major reason why excessive endurance training that causes a decrease in muscle mass can lower metabolism over time resulting in an increase in body fat. Key factors revealed through research are as follows:

- Resting energy expenditure increases significantly over the 24 hours following a strength training session.
- Muscle mass can still be maintained while on a low calorie diet if strength training sessions are done.
- One study looked at three different methods of fat loss and discovered that strength training participants lost 44% more fat than diet alone and 35% more fat than aerobic exercise alone.

Interval Training

Interval training is the second key component of a successful fat loss program. Interval training includes a series of exercises done for a specific time interval followed by a prescribed rest interval. This allows for a greater intensity of exercise to be performed than a slow steady state endurance session would allow. The higher level of intensity creates a greater metabolic disturbance which in turn raises the metabolism for 24-48 hours following the training session. In contrast, an aerobic training session such as a 30 minute run does not create much metabolic disturbance and your metabolism goes back to normal at the conclusion of the training session. This is the reason why interval training is superior to steady state aerobic training for fat loss. Here is an example of an interval training session:

Active-Dynamic Warm-Up: 10 Minutes

1. Lat Pulldown with Reverse Lunge
2. Push-Ups
3. Med-Ball Throw
4. Agility Ladder
5. Step-Up with Overhead Press
6. Standing Cable Row
7. 3-Way Crunch
8. Jumping Jacks

Each exercise is performed for 30 seconds followed by 30 seconds of rest. The entire series is repeated 2-3 times with 90 seconds of rest between.

An effective set-up for a fat loss training program might include two strength training sessions per week and two interval training sessions per week. In addition, proper nutrition, supplementation, and rest are critical components of a successful fat loss program and are topics for other articles.

Reference: Cosgrove, A. Science of Fat Loss. Cosgrove Results Fitness Training: 2008. p 72-77, 85-102.