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High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT): Your Best Shot

As I talk with experienced River Bank Run participants, one goal I consistently hear is that they would like to improve on their time from previous years. So how can you intensify or alter your training/workouts to improve your strength, endurance and overall health?

The answer is high intensity interval training (HIIT). HIIT is a proven workout for anyone, from beginners to elite athletes. It has physical and performance advantages that can make you a better athlete.

Sometimes workouts can get mundane and your body gets used to a workout pattern, which can hinder improvements in speed and endurance. HIIT is a short burst of intense exercise followed by a lower intensity recovery phase, repeated in intervals, for a 15- to 30-minute workout. HIIT can apply to any type of exercise, including running, biking, jump roping, rowing, swimming, walking or elliptical. Plus, you can create and personalize the type of routine that best fits your workout.

If you are new to HIIT, start slowly and increase the intensity as your ability allows. As mentioned previously, a HIIT workout should take 15-30 minutes for maximum benefit and should be performed multiple times per week, but not every day, as part of your training routine. For runners, the intense phase of the training should be sprinting at high levels followed by a less intense jog/run.

Here is one simple example of a HIIT running workout:

1. Warm up with stretching and a slow/moderate jog for 5-10 minutes
2. Sprint for 1-2 minutes at your highest running potential
3. Jog for 2-3 minutes at a comfortable pace
4. Sprint for 1-2 minutes at your highest running potential
5. Jog for 2-3 minutes at a comfortable pace
6. Repeat for 1-3 more cycles
7. Cool down with a walk or light jog for 5 minutes

Research shows HIIT can be more advantageous than low intensity/high distance running. Here are some of the benefits:

- **Increased endurance and speed:** The body makes cellular and physiologic changes to work more efficiently, which increases stamina and prolongs the onset of fatigue.
 - **Weight loss:** The body works harder to recover after a HIIT session, so more calories are burned.
 - **Increased metabolism:** The body produces higher levels of human growth hormone, which increases calories burned and slows the aging process.
 - **Improved cardiovascular health:** The heart becomes more efficient and stronger. HIIT increases the amount of blood the heart pumps, decreases resting heart rate and decreases blood pressure.
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- Improved lung function and oxygen consumption: The muscles use oxygen more efficiently, which increases endurance.
- Decreased workout time: A 15-minute HIIT workout can equal or exceed the benefits of running at a consistent speed for an hour, according to research.

HIIT is an excellent and beneficial way to change up your workout and training. It is a fun, healthy and energizing way to train and can be personalized to your goals. Sports medicine physicians, athletic trainers, physical therapists and personal trainers can help you create a program. Many treadmills also have built-in interval training. But remember not to push yourself beyond your limits so that you do not cause or promote an injury.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding an injury or pain, please reach out to one of our experienced sports medicine providers at Corewell Health Medical Group Orthopedics at (616) 267- 8860. You can also find more information about us on our [website](#).
