



## Use Interval Training to Slow Aging

Want to look and feel younger? While everyone will age, regular aerobic exercise can decrease your biological age by 10 years or more (Shephard 2008).

Interval training is an effective way to exercise at a high enough intensity to significantly increase oxygen demands and ultimately slow aging (Wright & Perricelli 2008). Interval training consists of short bursts of going all out followed by brief periods of active recovery. It allows you to exercise briefly at a high intensity in order to force the body to adapt in ways that slow aging. How can you safely interval train? Get suggestions below from author and consultant Amy Ashmore, PhD, who holds a doctorate in kinesiology from the University of Texas at Austin.

### How to Interval Train

The best way to interval train is to keep it simple by changing one variable at a time; for example, increasing resistance on the elliptical trainer and maintaining speed, or increasing incline on the treadmill and maintaining speed. It makes no difference to the body which variable changes. All that matters is that the muscles work harder, oxygen demand increases, the heart rate goes up and thereby aging slows.

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### Designing Workouts

Here are some variables to consider when creating interval workouts.

**Speed.** Increasing speed is a way to boost intensity. However, increasing speed can cause injury and should be used with caution. It is best to increase exercise intensity gradually and be well conditioned and free from injuries.

**Incline.** Adding incline to a workout, is an alternative way to increase intensity on most cardio equipment. A change in incline changes the mechanics of movement, requiring additional muscles to be used, both of which increase heart rate and what the body consumes.

**Resistance.** The greater the resistance, the harder the muscles and bones work. This variable can be increased by increasing resistance on machines or by incorporating bodyweight exercises.

**Relationship to Gravity.** One of the most effective ways to train is to work against gravity; for example, incorporating jump squats into a workout.

**Impact.** Impact is associated with sustained activities like jogging, but explosive movements such as jumping are effective for improving cardiovascular fitness. Moves in a nonsustained manner, such as plyometrics, call for the same intensity of almost any exercise. Plyometrics calls for the same intensity when speeding up an exercise.

**Lower Alternating Workouts.** One simple way to increase intensity is to alternate a low intensity exercise with a high intensity exercise.



### All-Out Effort Versus Recovery

All-out efforts cannot be maintained for long; how long each all-out interval can be maintained depends on intensity and heart rate. The goal should be to sustain high-intensity exercise for 30 seconds to 1 minute. "High-intensity" is anything that makes the heart work at 85% of maximum or higher. However, 85% may not be feasible for everyone, and you may need to modify your intensity level. The recovery time is proportional to the intensity and the length of the all-out phase. For example, 1 minute at 85% should require 2–3 minutes of recovery. Sticking to the exact time increments is not nearly as important as simply incorporating short bursts of high-intensity exercise in training sessions. ■