

Body, Beauty, Being

Holiday Fitness

How to Keep Your Program On Track

By Mark Spreizer, ACE Certified Personal Trainer

The new year is upon us, and if your resolution was to lose a few pounds this year, following the holidays, frankly ... you should be. The average American gains five to eight pounds during the season between Halloween and New Year's. It doesn't take a genius to figure out why, either. During the holidays we eat more and exercise less. But try to relax; this time doesn't need to be a weight-gaining nightmare. I've come up with some ideas and techniques to help remove that holiday padding.

First, try shifting your focus from weight loss to weight maintenance. Restricting oneself from food usually causes the dieter to crave the very food they're trying to avoid, and craving can lead to bingeing, which isn't good for anyone.

Below are some easy ways to maximize your workout's intensity while minimizing time in the gym. They're called training systems and are great additions to any program.

1. Interval Training is a cardio training technique of cycling between high-intensity work periods and low-intensity recovery periods. It can be preformed on any piece of cardio equipment. Start with three minutes at a moderate intensity to warm up. Then increase your speed or resistance higher than you ever have before and try to hold it for another three minutes. Now, take three minutes at a low intensity to recover, and then repeat three minutes again at your highest-ever intensity. Continue alternating between three minutes of high-and three minutes of low-intensity cycles. After about 20 minutes, you should be begging for mercy.

2. Supersets is a technique of alternating resistance-training exercises between two body parts at a time. For instance, start with a chest press and follow it immediately with a bicep curl. Then return right away to the chest press and repeat. Once you've completed this combo three times, move on to a new set of body parts. Try these pairings—chest with biceps, back with triceps, and shoulders with legs. This technique should cut your resistance training time almost in half.

3. Circuit Training is a resistance training technique of moving from one strength training exercise to another, with little or no rest between them. Keep your repetitions between 15 and 20 and group your exercises by body parts. For instance, perform three to four leg exercises followed by three to four movements for chest, then three to four for back, and so on. Once you hit all the muscles of the body, rest for a minute or two, then repeat the circuit one or two more times. Because the body is constantly moving, this is also a great way to get your cardio done at the same time.

With these techniques in your fitness arsenal, you'll be much better equipped to deal with the time constraints and temptations of the holidays; and you'll be much more successful at keeping your program on track.

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