

Tabata

Say “Ta-(ba)-ta” to lengthy cardio

The four-minute intense interval workout

Who invented TABATA?

Dr. Izumi Tabata and his colleagues at the National Institute of Health and Nutrition wanted to establish the minimum amount of training needed to increase fitness.

The results of their research were astonishing – the team tested athletes' VO2 max (the point at which they get winded) and found that those who followed the Tabata formula increased their VO2 max by 14% in six weeks. According to the journal *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, "Six to 8 very hard 20-second intervals with 10-second rest periods may be one of the best possible training protocols."

Your resting metabolism is higher in the few hours immediately after exercise as your body adapts to the stresses of the workout, rebuilds and "gets fitter". Anaerobic exercise's boosting effects are higher than steady aerobics. Tabata routines will therefore burn more calories (both during the session and the after-burn effects) than a longer, easier, session. As your resting metabolism burns predominantly fat, this means you get fitter and leaner with less training.

None of this is achieved with less effort, however. The Tabata protocol is fiendishly hard. The guinea pigs for the study were the Japanese Olympic-medal-winning speed-ice-skating team – and they had to lie down after the 8th interval. Tabata should only be attempted two to four times a week once you have established a good base of aerobic fitness, are capable of exercising for at least 30 minutes and have no health or injury issues.

The plus points

The beauty of Tabata training is any mode of cardio can be used for the "20-seconds flat-out, 10-seconds easy, and repeat" protocol. Due to the intensity level, however, low-impact forms such as ice-skating, aqua running, boxing and running on a rebounder are ideal.

The routine

Warm up: Ten minutes easy skipping, shadow boxing or jogging on the spot.

Work period: Stop, squat down until your thighs are level with the floor, then explode upwards, landing lightly. Repeat for 20 seconds.

Recovery period: Skip/box/jog for 10 seconds.

Repeat eight times. As your fitness increases, aim to jump higher or perform more jumps in the time you've got. Good luck!