

**FIT FOR LIFE** with Carol Westmorland

## Why interval training is the best way to a leaner, fitter you

It really is true that less is more. For decades there has been a widely held belief that should you wish to become leaner you must invest in countless hours of repetitive training, with jogging possibly the most popular choice.

You invest in your new running shoes and within a few weeks – if you get that far – you start to get little niggles. It may be your knees or hips or more commonly your lower back.

Of course there is a period of adjustment going on but without strong foundations in place there are very few people with good enough posture to withstand new, instant repetitive demands when put upon their body.

It can take as little as three weeks to become comfortable with a new routine and when that happens, you need to up your game. This means more and more miles and less time for you.

Your body, the clever machine that it is, needs to be constantly challenged or, put another way, your muscles need to be disturbed! What you actually have to be is inefficient. Reaching your comfort zone is all very well but you are missing an opportunity. To get the most from your fitness routine you must seek out the path of most resistance.

This is not about training to compete, when you do have to hone your skills to reach a level whereby you are at ease, this is about maximising your efforts in as little time as possible.

Your muscles burn three times more calories than fat. So, the less muscle you have, the fewer calories you will burn,



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therefore retaining more fat. A ten-minute session of high intensity interval training for your heart and lungs burns more calories, strengthens your heart and joints and increases your rate of food to energy conversion. It also allows you to keep your muscle tone.

I keep to six intervals each session. Depending on your base fitness level you may feel you want to begin with a 15-second interval and 30-second rest. Your exercises must push you; raising your heart rate. Your rest should allow your heart rate to lower.

Try the three-week rule of change. Give yourself a target of 45-second intervals with 90-second rest, which is the optimum for fat burning. This may take up to four months.

Try skipping, running on the spot, stepping on and off a bench or similar, star jumps, hula hooping, bouncing a ball, alternate knee lifts or punches (just check the person opposite is a willing participant!).

Always warm up. Begin within your ability and keep it steady – frantic movement encourages bad technique.

Build the number of repetitions over weeks not days. To improve, increase intensity or duration – just not both at the same time.

Your wonderful body remains efficient for 48 hours following your session.

To keep your body ticking over simply follow your routine without leaving more than 48 hours between sessions – and when you consider how short your sessions are, that is no great hardship. Think of all that extra time you have created to admire your new leaner physique!

**LIFE COACH** with Marion Dunlop

## Learning to change your life one step at a time

I like September. It's a month of so many changes for so many people – new classes, new courses, new colleges or universities, new places to live, new jobs if you've recently qualified, or possibly new ways of living if you've recently retired. Transitions can be exciting even though there may be an element of anxiety linked with change as we take ourselves out of our comfort zones.

Accept that these feelings are perfectly normal and a very human response to anything new. We like to feel safe in our surroundings and yet we strive for excitement too.

Well, I say bring it on! Wouldn't life be tedious if we just 'flat-lined' all the time?

Sometimes you may feel lonely, unsure

or doubtful about the choices you've made during the early times so stay flexible – adjustment takes time. Focus on the bigger vision linked with the changes – a new career, getting a degree or qualification, or a better lifestyle.

Use the people around you for support; remember they might be feeling the same. Phone your family if you've moved; they miss you too. Take the new experience one small step at a time and celebrate how you've succeeded and what you've learned about yourself on the journey. After a few weeks you'll feel like you've been there for ages as everything becomes normal and familiar.

If the decision turns out to not be the right one for you think seriously about

what's not working and see if you can fix it. If you are still unhappy remember you haven't signed up for life. You've given it a good chance and now you're making a decision which is true to yourself.

Important friends and family will respect and love you whatever you decide.

My philosophy is to be able to look back and have no regrets – trying something new is a success, deciding something isn't right for you is a success; staying unhappy because of what other people might think isn't so successful in my book!



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