

Duration, Intensity and Purpose

By Paul Sims

Why do you exercise? Weight loss? To look more toned? To feel more fit? To enhance your sports ability?

Have you ever wondered if the duration and intensity of your exercise is right for the purpose? Let me give you an example. If your purpose is to run a marathon or some other long endurance event, then the duration will be long and the intensity will be low. To clarify even more, duration is the length of the total workout and the length of the individual interval during the workout. In the case of the strength training session, duration would also apply to the total length of the workout and the length of each set of repetitions.

Intensity refers to power or force, such as lifting a heavy weight or running up hill as fast as you can. High intensity could be applied to most any machine you are using at the gym.

And purpose is the goal of your workout. That is the reason you are exercising.

The problem I see is that most people are doing steady state aerobics on the treadmill or elliptical (long duration, low intensity) and think that they will maximize fat loss and give them the tone and hard body they are looking for.

Let's take a look at what more intense and shorter duration exercise can do for you. A study in the 2002 issue of the Journal of Applied Physiology reported that high intensity sprinting triggers the release of testosterone and produces 96% more growth hormone when tested against the effects of jogging at a significantly slower pace (aerobic). This hormonal effect is responsible for the increased post-exercise caloric consumption which accelerates fat loss in the body. Aerobic exercise does not trigger the same response.

If your goal or purpose is to lose fat and get that hard toned body, you need to be doing strength training and high intensity interval training. HIIT training involves high intensity bursts of activity, such as running, biking and rowing with one or two minutes rest in between. This type of workout is also shorter in total time because of its intensity. Intensity is different for everyone. Some might be able to run almost 400 meters in one minute and others only half that. But it is intense for both.

So take a look at your own workout or have a qualified trainer evaluate if the duration and intensity are right for the purpose.

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