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Not only will this help you perform better in the circuit itself, but it can also help with other activities in fitness and daily life by allowing you to use your muscles longer and more effectively.Depending on the exercises you perform during the circuit, you may be able to build stronger and larger muscles.Muscle growth (hypertrophy) requires a person to lift moderate to heavy weights or perform a high number of reps just before failure, a point at which you can’t do another rep, to stimulate muscle growth.Since circuit training puts your muscles under ongoing tension, this can stimulate neuromuscular adaptations and muscle growth to build larger and stronger muscles.Circuit training is a favorite for many because it combines strength training and cardiorespiratory training.As you build your lung capacity, you’ll fatigue less easily during each circuit.Instead of splitting your workouts throughout the week to target specific muscle groups, circuit training includes a variety of exercises to give you a full-body workout.You usually alternate between different muscle groups as you move from exercise to exercise. For example, as you perform an upper body exercise like pull-ups, your lower body can rest.Ultimately, this can help you get the most out of your workouts, especially if you don’t have time to exercise most days of the week.If you’re short on time, you can still get in a high quality workout with circuit training.Since there are minimal breaks during a session, you can complete your workout in a short time frame. In fact, most circuit training sessions are only 20–30 minutes.People are less likely to stick to a workout program if they get bored easily. Fortunately, circuit training may be the solution you’re looking for.Since you’re constantly going from one exercise to the next, you have little time to become bored. Furthermore, circuit training classes provide a fun, entertaining environment that can keep you connected with others.If you’re designing your own circuit, you can switch it up each session with different workouts. 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It’s a form of full-body training that involves rotating through different exercises with limited to no rest in between.Combining cardio and strength training can help improve muscular strength and endurance, promote heart health, and support weight loss.It’s also a great workout for those who get bored easily or are short on time but still want to fit in a high quality workout.Whether you’re an avid athlete, the average gym-goer, or working out in your basement, circuit training can benefit you. I’ve been teaching circuit training for almost 40 years. In fact, my first job in the fitness industry was as a circuit training instructor. However, I actually started circuit training about five years earlier, when it was a part of my strength and conditioning workouts as an up-and-coming high school athlete. Since then, I’ve used circuit training to help many of my clients reach their health, fitness, and body composition goals. It regularly features in my own workouts, too. Additionally, I’ve taught dozens of circuit training courses to prospective instructors. Long story short, I’m something of a circuit training expert, having spent decades studying and utilizing this powerful and versatile training method. Unfortunately, many people don’t know how effective and beneficial circuit training can be. That’s probably because circuit training is quite old-school and can even seem outdated compared to things like HIIT and other high-tech workouts. With that in mind, in this article, I reveal the science-backed benefits of circuit training. When you see how effective circuit training is, I’m confident you’ll want to try it yourself. What is Circuit Training? Before we delve into the benefits of circuit training, let’s take a moment to define what circuit training is and provide you with a sample workout to try. Circuit training has been around for thousands of years and was practiced by both the ancient Romans and Greeks. However, it was first formally studied in the 1950s at Leeds University in the UK by R.E. Morgan and G.T. Anderson (1). But what is circuit training? While there are numerous ways to do circuit training, the most fundamental versions involve doing multiple exercises back-to-back. In circuit training, exercises are called stations, and you do each one for a predetermined time or number of reps. While there is no set number of stations for circuit training, 6-12 is typical. Most circuit workouts involve doing multiple rounds of the stations, usually 2-5. Rests (called transitions) between stations are generally kept short, but you get a longer break between rounds, usually 1-3 minutes. Why all this unusual fitness lingo? The original circuits were arranged around the outside of sports halls, so you moved around the room, transitioning from one exercise to the next. So, terms like stations and rounds make sense, right? Anyway, circuit training can involve a few or many different types of training equipment or none at all. Calisthenic or bodyweight circuits are especially popular in the military. Here’s a typical mixed modality circuit training example. Do each exercise for 45 seconds, taking no more than 10-15 seconds to transition from one to the next. Perform three rounds and rest for 1-2 minutes between each round. Note the lower body, upper body, and core sequence of the stations. This order ensures that all major muscle groups are trained equally and that you can maintain a brisk pace for the duration of the workout. In contrast, doing similar exercises back-to-back creates a lot of localized fatigue, invariably hampering workout performance. Related: The Science-Backed Benefits of Circuit Training Now you understand how circuit training works, let’s look at the benefits of this proven training method! 1. Weight Management The non-stop nature of circuit training means that energy expenditure is higher than for conventional strength training. While the actual kilocalorie cost will depend on the duration and intensity of your workout, studies indicate that circuit training can help you lose or maintain your weight (2). Using large compound exercises, working hard, and keeping your rest periods to a minimum will all raise your energy expenditure, leading to faster weight loss. Use this calculator to estimate how many kilocalories you’ll burn during a circuit training workout. 2. Improved Cardiovascular Fitness While some circuit training workouts involve short bouts of cardio, e.g., jump rope, sprints, etc., most revolve around strength training exercises, e.g., push-ups, lunges, and pull-ups. However, despite this, circuit training has been shown to enhance cardiovascular fitness, measured by increases in participants’ VO2 max (3). So, whether you don’t have time to do much cardio or find things like running and cycling boring, it’s reassuring to know that circuit training will enhance your cardiovascular fitness and, therefore, improve your heart, lung, and circulatory health (4). 3. Increased Muscular Endurance, Strength, and Power When most people talk about fitness, they’re referring to their heart, lungs, and circulatory system. However, you can use the term fitness in relation to the functional capacity of your muscles, too. Broadly speaking, there are three types of muscular fitness (5). Muscular endurance is the ability of your muscles to generate low amounts of force for a prolonged period. It’s best developed by doing high-rep sets interspersed with short rests. In contrast, muscular strength is the ability to generate lots of force for a relatively short time. Lifting heavy weights is an example of this. Muscular power is a force produced quickly. Also known as explosive strength, power is an integral part of most sports. Activities requiring power include sprinting, jumping, kicking, throwing, and punching. You can use circuit training to enhance all types of muscular fitness. You just need to plan your workout accordingly. However, most circuit workouts focus on endurance, as this is arguably the most straightforward type of muscular fitness to program and develop. 4. Improved Mood Circuit training combines strength training with cardio to deliver a comprehensive workout. However, while circuit training is excellent for your physical fitness and health, it’s good for your brain, too. Studies suggest that cardio and strength training can enhance your mood and lower stress and anxiety (6). Circuit training is also empowering, making participants feel less overwhelmed by challenging situations. If you can cope with the demands of a tough circuit workout, you can cope with anything! While circuit training is not a cure-all for all mental health issues, it’s reassuring to know that it’s good for both your body and brain. As the saying goes, mens sana in corpore sano, which is Latin for a healthy mind in a healthy body. 5. Increased Exercise Adherence Even the best workout isn’t worth the paper it’s written on if you don’t do it regularly. Consequently, exercise adherence is critical for building fitness and strength and effective weight management. While conventional strength and cardio training are undeniably effective, some people find them too regimented, repetitive, and boring. As such, they soon lose motivation to work out (7). Exercise drop-out is very common, especially around February/Match time, when most New Year’s Resolutions are left for dead. Circuit training is highly variable, and there is no reason to repeat a workout if you don’t want to. It can also be fine-tuned to match your fitness goals and cater to your exercise likes and dislikes. As such, circuit training could be the ideal workout for those who struggle to exercise consistently. You can participate in circuits in a group class at a gym or sports center or do circuit workouts alone at home. Such versatility means that exercise enjoyment and adherence should be high. 6. Time-Efficient Workouts Most well-rounded fitness routines involve strength training and cardio. However, doing separate programs for each fitness component is time-consuming and requires frequent workouts. For example, you might lift weights Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and then jog, cycle, or swim Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. In contrast, circuit training builds muscular and cardiovascular fitness at the same time, making it much more time-efficient. Subsequently, you’ll need fewer workouts per week to achieve similar results. This time-saving benefit is especially strong if you focus on full-body circuits and don’t just do core or push-up circuits, which were popular when I was a Royal Marine. Lack of time is a significant barrier to consistent exercise (8). Circuit training is one of the best ways to overcome this problem. 7. Suitable for All Fitness Levels and Goals Circuit training is very versatile, and workouts can be adjusted to meet almost all levels of fitness and any training goal. The main variables of circuit training are: Exercise difficulty Number of exercises per workout Duration/number of reps Load Proximity to failure Rest between exercises Number of rounds Rest between rounds Modifying these variables allows you to create the perfect workout for your needs and goals. Very few other workouts offer the same flexibility. Consequently, you can keep using circuit training for your entire fitness journey, as it’s a workout that grows with you. Circuit Training Benefits – Closing Thoughts The fitness principle of specificity states that your body adapts to the type of workout you do. Therefore, to build massive muscles, you should train like a bodybuilder. On the flip side, powerlifting is probably the way to go if you want to get super-strong. Then again, if you want to improve your cardiovascular fitness, you’ll need to dedicate your energy and time to cardio. However, if like many exercisers, you want to be fit, strong, lean, and healthy, circuit training is one of the best options. While circuit training won’t maximize your muscle size, strength, or fitness, it will deliver impressive gains in all these areas, making you all-around fit and strong. Not sure if circuit training is for you? I suggest you try it for a month and experience the transformative power of this workout for yourself. You’ll find more information on circuit training here. 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It’s a form of full-body training that involves rotating through different exercises with limited to no rest in between.Combining cardio and strength training can help improve muscular strength and endurance, promote heart health, and support weight loss.It’s also a great workout for those who get bored easily or are short on time but still want to fit in a high quality workout.Whether you’re an avid athlete, the average gym-goer, or working out in your basement, circuit training can benefit you. 28 December 2024 Let’s face it—life’s busy. Between juggling work, family, hobbies, and everything else, finding time to work out often feels like trying to find a needle in a haystack. But what if I told you there’s a workout that’s quick, versatile, and effective? Enter circuit training! Whether you’re a fitness newbie or a seasoned gym-goer, circuit training is a game-changer. But wait—what exactly is circuit training? And why is everyone (including you soon) raving about it? Don’t worry—I’ve got you covered. In this comprehensive guide, we’ll break down what circuit training is, its benefits, and how you can easily incorporate it into your fitness routine. Ready to dive in? Let’s go! What is Circuit Training? Circuit training is like the Swiss Army knife of workouts—it’s versatile, efficient, and gets the job done. At its core, circuit training involves completing a series of exercises (called stations) in a specific order, with little to no rest between them. After finishing one full round, you’ve completed a “circuit.” You can repeat the circuit multiple times depending on how much time or energy you have. The beauty of circuit training lies in its flexibility. You can mix and match exercises to target different muscle groups, focus on cardio, or work on building strength. Plus, it suits almost everyone—it doesn’t matter if you’re at the gym, working out at home, or even sweating it out in a park. The Key Benefits of Circuit Training So, why does circuit training deserve a spot in your fitness routine? Here’s the lowdown: 1. Time-Efficient Workouts (Perfect for Busy People) If you’re short on time, circuit training is like hitting the workout jackpot. Since you’re moving quickly from one exercise to the next, you pack a ton of activity into a short period. In just 20 to 30 minutes, you can crush a full-body workout! It's a win-win for anyone trying to balance fitness with a packed schedule. Think of circuit training as the fast-food equivalent of workouts—but way healthier and actually good for you! 2. Burns Calories Like Crazy Want to torch calories in less time? Circuit training’s got your back. By combining strength training and cardio, your heart rate stays elevated throughout the workout. This mix not only burns calories during the session but also keeps your metabolism revved up afterward, thanks to the “afterburn effect” (also known as excess post-exercise oxygen consumption, or EPOC). Basically, you’re burning calories while binge-watching Netflix later. How cool is that? 3. Full-Body Workout in One Go Don’t have the luxury of dedicating separate days to legs, arms, and cardio? No problem! Circuit training lets you target multiple muscle groups in one session. By alternating exercises, you can hit your whole body without overworking a particular area. For example, you might go from squats (lower body) to push-ups (upper body) to jump rope (cardio). By the time you’re done, you’ll have worked up a sweat and given your body a comprehensive workout. 4. Boosts Cardiovascular Health Circuit training isn’t just about building muscle. Because of its fast-paced nature, it also gets your heart pumping and improves your cardiovascular health. Over time, this can lead to lower blood pressure, a reduced risk of heart disease, and better endurance. Who wouldn’t want a happier, healthier heart? 5. Builds Strength and Muscle Tone Don’t let the quick pace fool you—circuit training is a fantastic way to build strength and tone your muscles. By incorporating resistance exercises like deadlifts, planks, or resistance band rows, you can challenge your muscles and see real progress over time. The bonus? You won’t bulk up unless you specifically train for it. Instead, you’ll develop lean, defined muscles that look strong yet sleek. Sounds like a win to me! 6. Improves Mental Focus and Mood Ever walked into a gym, stared at the equipment, and felt totally lost? Yup, me too. Circuit training takes the guesswork out of your workouts. By following a structured plan, you stay focused and motivated. Plus, regular exercise releases endorphins—your body’s very own “happy chemicals.” The result? You leave your workout feeling less stressed, more energized, and ready to tackle the day. How to Create Your Own Circuit Training Workout Ready to give circuit training a shot? Don’t worry—you don’t need fancy equipment or a personal trainer (unless you want one!). Here’s how you can create your own killer circuit workout: Step 1: Choose Your Goal What’s your fitness goal? Want to burn fat, build muscle, or increase endurance? Your goal will determine the types of exercises you include. Step 2: Pick Your Exercises Aim for 6-8 exercises that target different muscle groups. Here’s a sample combo for a full-body circuit: - Jumping jacks (cardio) - Push-ups (upper body) - Squats (lower body) - Plank (core) - Dumbbell rows (upper body) - Lunges (lower body) Step 3: Set Your Timing Decide how long you’ll perform each exercise (e.g., 30 seconds to 1 minute) and how much rest you’ll take between exercises (if any). Step 4: Repeat and Celebrate Aim for 2-4 rounds of your circuit, depending on your fitness level. Trust me—you’ll feel like a rockstar when you’re done! Tips to Maximize Your Circuit Training Results Want to get the most out of your workouts? Keep these tips in mind: 1. Start Slow: If you’re new to circuit training, ease into it. You can always increase intensity as you gain strength and confidence. 2. Focus on Form: Proper form is everything. Take your time to learn each exercise to prevent injury. 3. Mix It Up: Don’t let your circuits get boring! Change up your exercises every few weeks to keep things fresh and challenging. 4. Hydrate and Fuel Up: Drink plenty of water and eat a balanced meal or snack after your workout to aid recovery. 5. Track Your Progress: Keep a journal or use a fitness app to monitor your improvements. It’s super satisfying to see how far you’ve come! Is Circuit Training Right for You? Absolutely! Circuit training is one of the most adaptable workout styles out there. Whether you’re short on time, looking to spice up your fitness routine, or aiming for a full-body workout that packs a punch, circuit training has something for everyone. Plus, it’s not just for gym junkies. You can do it at home, outdoors, or even in your living room. With a little creativity, the possibilities are endless. The Bottom Line Circuit training is more than just a workout—it’s a lifestyle hack. It saves you time. It gets results. It keeps things fun. And let’s be real: who doesn’t want to feel stronger, fitter, and more energized without spending hours at the gym? So what are you waiting for? Lace up your sneakers, grab a water bottle, and give circuit training a try. Trust me, your body—and your busy schedule—will thank you! all images in this post were generated using AI tools You won't be bored when you do circuit training. This workout gets your heart rate up and strengthens your muscles at the same time.You’ll move quickly through 8-10 exercise stations to work different muscle groups with little to no rest between stations. Each station has a different exercise. You may do bicep curls or jump rope for 60 seconds.You’ll do about 10-25 reps at each station, lasting between 30 seconds and 3 minutes, and then move on to the next station.To keep things interesting, you can switch up the sequence, swap out different stations, and do it at the gym with equipment, at home with dumbbells and resistance bands, or on a fitness trail by alternating push-ups and squats with brisk walking or biking.Allow at least 20-30 minutes for the workout. If you're new to the moves, work with a trainer or take a class so you learn how to do each exercise right.Push yourself as hard as you want. If you want to make it more challenging, switch from station to station faster or boost the intensity. Or you can work out at a more comfortable pace.Core: Yes. Any station that engages your core, whether it’s a machine like the standing low cable hip abduction or an exercise like a front plank, can help you strengthen your core.Arms: Yes. Use dumbbells for bicep curls and tricep extensions, or use gym equipment like triceps pushdowns or preacher curls.Legs: Yes. Your legs will get a workout from gym machines like the seated leg press. For an extra boost, include intervals of squats or lunges in your circuit.Glutes: Yes. Slip in any exercise that fires your glutes. At home or on a fitness trail, a station of lunges will do the trick. If you’re at the gym, opt for a machine like the lying hamstring curl machine.Back: Yes. Use gym equipment like the seated machine row. At-home or on-trail moves like the front plank or pull-ups also target your back.Flexibility: Yes. Using proper technique as you work through your circuit will improve your flexibility.Aerobic: Yes. Moving quickly through exercises makes this a good cardiovascular workout. If you include cardio stations like jumping rope, going up or down stairs, or jogging in place, you’ll get an added cardio boost.Strength: Yes. Any station that involves strength training, like push-ups, dumbbells, or strength training machines, will make you stronger.Sport: No, but if you're an athlete, circuit training is a great tool to improve your sports performance.Low-Impact: Yes. You can choose low-impact exercises only.Cost: It can be free if you use exercises that use your own body weight, like push-ups, planks, and lunges, or if you use equipment along a walking trail or a parcourse. If you do your circuits at the gym, you’ll pay gym membership fees.Good for beginners? Yes. You can create your own circuit that’s right for you, even if you’re just starting out.Outdoors: Yes. Try it on a fitness trail or your own backyard.At home: Yes. Create stations out of exercises that use your own body weight, or use resistance bands, dumbbells, or kettlebells. Or try a DVD to guide you through a circuit-training workout.Equipment required? No. You can choose exercises that use your own body weight. Or you can buy at-home equipment like dumbbells and resistance bands. If you belong to a gym, you can use the gym’s fitness machines.If you’re looking for a full-body workout in 30 minutes or less, circuit training does the trick. You get the benefits of muscle building and toning along with an intense cardio workout.If you get bored trotting along on a treadmill or elliptical, circuit training can fix that, too. The exercise options are endless. Switch up the exercises frequently to tame the exercise doldrums and keep improving your body.Work at your own pace. Start with a trainer one-on-one or in a small group setting to make sure you’re doing the exercises correctly and working within your limits.Is It Good for Me If I Have a Health Condition? Circuit training is an excellent option to help you lose weight along with a healthy diet. So if you need to lose weight because you have a condition like diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol, this may be a good choice for you.It's intense, so check with your doctor first. You might be better off starting with something easier, especially if you have any heart problems.If you have diabetes, make sure you know what to do if your blood sugar goes too low when exercising.If you have arthritis, choose low-impact exercises. Don't do any moves that put pounding pressure on painful joints, like jumping jacks.If you have a knee or back injury, circuit training isn’t for you. Once you’ve recovered, it could be an option. Ask your doctor if you're ready for it. You may want to work with a physical therapist or certified trainer who can help you get the benefits while minimizing the risk of re-injury. If you're taking a class, let your instructor know about your injuries.If you have other physical limitations, you can likely find something that works for you. An instructor or trainer can work with you to find moves that will still get your heart pumping and tone your muscles.If you're pregnant and you did circuit training before getting pregnant, you can keep doing it if your doctor says it's OK. Drink water while you exercise, and don't do any exercises that could make you fall or get overheated. Circuit training has become a shining star in the ever-changing fitness world for anyone looking for a quick and effective workout. This approach, consisting of a succession of exercises done one after the other with little time for rest, is meant to increase heart rate, burn fat, and work several muscle groups simultaneously. Circuit training is well-known for its effectiveness and adaptability to busy people’s schedules. The appeal of getting the best fitness outcomes in the shortest time grows as people balance the demands of jobs, family, and other responsibilities. This introduction lays the groundwork for examining the science and plethora of advantages associated with circuit training, providing insight into why it has grown in popularity among fitness enthusiasts across the globe. Understanding Circuit Training Src 1. Explaining Circuit Training A thorough and vigorous exercise, circuit training combines cardiovascular and strength training into one well-planned program. Fundamentally, circuit training executes a set of exercises in a predetermined order with little to no rest. The secret is to work on different muscle groups while maintaining an elevated heart rate during the exercise. This unique blend increases anaerobic and aerobic fitness while optimizing calorie burn. In summary, circuit training aims to train different muscles sequentially by organizing separate exercises in a specific order. It allows for less pause time between exercises and allows them to flow virtually directly into one another. One muscle group is being trained while the other is recuperating. Moving from one workout station to the next, participants in a conventional circuit must complete a certain number of repetitions or a timed interval before moving on to the next station. The various exercises, which target multiple muscle groups and lower the risk of overuse issues, ensure a thorough workout. Furthermore, the thoughtful incorporation of cardio components increases the overall intensity and supports cardiovascular health and strength growth. Circuit training promotes efficiency and variety, which sets it apart from other types of exercise. Contrary to the isolated character of traditional weightlifting or aerobic workouts, circuit training provides a comprehensive strategy that meets the many fitness demands. Participants save time and retain a higher level of interest when they effortlessly move between activities. The emergence of circuit training in the fitness industry reflects a growing understanding of the significance of time management in attaining optimal health. Examining the underlying physics of circuit training reveals many advantages beyond the noticeable physical changes. High-intensity intervals, the foundation of this training approach, efficiently encourage fat loss and calorie burning. Strength and aerobic exercises combine to create a metabolic demand that lasts long after the workout, which makes circuit training an effective weight-management technique. Even after 30 minutes of circuit exercise, your body will burn calories. In a single-circuit training session, your metabolism is triggered by alternating between short rest and weighted cardio intervals. Harvard Medical School states that if you weigh 125 pounds, you can burn 240 calories in 30 minutes of general circuit exercise; if you weigh 155 pounds, you can burn 298 calories; and if you weigh around 185 pounds, you can burn 355 calories. Your body will burn calories through the day at a higher pace, so you even get an extra round. Excess Post-Exercise Oxygen Consumption (EPOC) is a notion that is fundamental to the science of circuit training. EPOC, also called the “afterburn effect,” is the increased oxygen consumption after physical activity to return the body to its pre-exercise state. Because of its intensity and energy requirements, circuit training has a notable EPOC effect. It implies that the body continues to burn calories throughout the recovery phase, even after finishing a circuit workout. Circuit training sessions offer many benefits, from weight loss and body composition improvement to muscle building and creating whole workouts with bodyweight movements. Designing Effective Circuit Workouts Src 3. Components of a Circuit Workout A few key components must be appropriately combined to create a circuit workout that is challenging for participants while still balanced. A well-rounded circuit should include cardiovascular workouts to increase heart rate and strength-training routines targeting various muscle groups. This variety keeps the session interesting and offers a thorough workout without getting boring. Circuit training workouts revolve around a predetermined number of “stations” that you repeat until the allotted time is up. Therefore, figuring out how much time you have to work with can help you calculate how hard and how many circuits you need to accomplish. Circuit training could take 10 to 45 minutes, but the shorter the workout, the harder you should push yourself. This strategy promotes cardiovascular fitness and calorie burn by maintaining a raised heart rate. Additionally, the intermittent pauses allow for muscular recovery, which helps participants maintain perfect form and avoid injuries due to tiredness. Another important consideration when creating circuit exercises that succeed is intensity. Finding the ideal mix between challenging workouts and reasonable work-to-rest ratios is essential. By adj