

12 Weeks to Improved Aerobic Fitness

The 15 min HIIT Workout Series

Welcome to the 12 week, 15 min HIIT workout series. You can do these on a bike, walking, running, jogging, or on an elliptical—anything that involves the repeated use of large muscle groups. You can vary the effort by changing the grade, speed and/or resistance. HIIT, BTW stands for high intensity interval training.

How it Works

If you feel like you have limited time to exercise, then this is for you. These workouts are designed to be separated by one day (e.g. M, W, F), but that is not a hard and fast rule. On the other days you can do yoga, or resistance exercise (like using the dynabands), or an easy aerobic workout.

The sequence of these workouts is pretty simple, day 1 are short intervals with high intensity, day 2 are slightly longer intervals at moderately hard intensity and on day 3 the intervals are a bit longer but at a more moderate intensity. The good news is they are varied and hopefully this will mean the **15 min will fly by**. If you have more time (like 20 minutes) there is a bonus round (**BR**). If you have even more time you can always add time to your warm up, cool down and/or add more repeats. There is some progression over the 12 weeks. The first few weeks will be slightly less intense while the last few weeks will be more intense. Every 4th week will be a repeat week.

Intensity level=IL

These are the different intensity levels. Think of them as being on a spectrum of 1-5 with 1 being the easiest and 5 being as hard as you can go. But below are some descriptions.

IL1=easy (comfortable, warm up pace, easy to carry on a conversation, could go all day if you had to, 60% of max)

IL2= brisk (comfortable, brisk, light conversation, could go sustain the pace for an hour if you had to, 60-75% of max)

IL3= somewhat hard (somewhat uncomfortable, conversation possible but in short sentences, somewhat out of breath, but not an all-out effort, about 70-80% of an all-out effort, it would be the effort you would put out if you were doing a 10km race, for example)

IL4= hard (uncomfortable, conversation not that easy, not an all-out effort but close, 75-90% of max)

IL5= hard to all-out (hard, close to full gas for whatever length of time is prescribed, 90-100% of max)

Anytime you see a “+” as in @IL2+ the effort is somewhere between IL2 and IL3

What does this mean? **1 min @IL2/1 min @IL4 x 4** This means you do 1 min at intensity level 2 followed by 1 min at intensity level 4, then back to 1 min at intensity level 2 and you continue this sequence 4 times for a total of 8 minutes.

20 sec @IL 5/40 sec @IL2 x 5 This means you do 20 sec at intensity level 5 followed by 20 sec at intensity level 2 repeated 5 times for a total of 5 minutes. So the 20 sec is close to all-out, but still holding back a tad as you have to do 5 of them.

Other abbreviations: **WU=warm up**; **MS=main set**; **CD=cool down**; **BR=bonus round** (if you have more time)

*Note: it can take some time to figure out how hard to go for different prescribed intensities. That is ok; the main thing is to vary things a bit. If you haven't been doing much exercise up to this point, then you might want to err on the side of going a **bit less intense for the first couple of weeks.***

FAQ

1. **What if I miss a workout?** There are 2 ways you can deal with this, a) move on, do the next one and don't worry about it or b) make it up the next week so you end doing 4 workouts that week rather than 3. I would recommend just skipping it though as 4 hard workouts in a week can be tough on the body, unless you are 18 years old (or a vegan).
2. **If it feels too easy can I increase the intensity?** Yes
3. **If it feels too hard, can I back off?** Yes. I am not going to be standing over you with a cattle prod.
4. **Will these make me sweat?** Yes, you will be working pretty hard, that is what HIIT training is all about. Although, if you are a woman, you will perspire, rather than sweat.
5. **Can I do just 2 workouts a week?** Yes you can either just pick 2 out of the 3 or you can do 2 per week for 18 weeks (and still get them all in).
6. **Can I do different workouts doing different modes of exercise, e.g. do some on the elliptical and some on the treadmill or bike?** Yes. It is actually a good idea to change modes once in a while.
7. **Can I do some outside and others inside?** Yes, feel free to mix it up. Going outside is always preferred.
8. **If I choose to do these walking, how do I increase the intensity?** Do the intervals on hills (outside) or stairs or on the treadmill at a grade. You can also increase the speed and learn to race walk.
9. **How much harder are the 30 min compared to the 15 min workouts?** Actually not a lot harder. The 30 min does allow for some extra intervals, but I also added time for warm up, increased recovery from the intervals and the cool down, which is always nice.
10. **Can I alternate between the 15 min or the 30 min workouts?** Yes, just try to keep the sequence as there is a progression over the 12 weeks.
11. **What is the best exercise?** Whatever you like to do the most. These probably wouldn't work that well for swimming, but you can sure try.
12. **Do I do these at my own risk?** Yes, if you have been diagnosed with a cardiac condition and/or if you smoke and/or if you have high blood pressure you must consult with your doctor before doing this.
13. **Can I do these if I am really out of shape?** Yes, but I would not go super hard for the first few weeks. You can change up the intensity a bit, but don't go all out. The only exception to this is if you are in your 20s or 30s, then you can go hard off the coach.
14. **Why do HIIT training?** HIIT training has been shown to induce rapid and significant improvements in cardiorespiratory fitness while spending a lot less time exercising.
15. **I am older than 50, is it still ok for me to do these?** Yes, in fact doing HIIT training becomes more important as we age. But if you haven't been exercising for the last 25 (or 5) of those 50 years then you might want to do 3 weeks of just easy workouts without the intervals (but still go 3x per week), then start by just doing 2 of the interval workouts a week and make the 3rd one an easy workout. Or see question 13.
16. **What do I do when the 12 weeks is up?** You can start the cycle over again and add an extra interval (or not). What you can't do is go back to sitting on the couch watching soap operas and eating bacon or fried pork rinds.
17. **Can I go longer than the 15 or 30 minutes?** Yes, that is what the bonus round is for. Or you can just increase your warm up and cool down time.
18. **What are the risks?** Having a heart attack, for one, unless of course you eat a plant based diet. High intensity exercise is associated with increased risk of musculoskeletal injury. Don't be a hero. Know the difference between pain and discomfort. Discomfort is your body's way of saying, "What the hell are you doing? You haven't done this to me for 20 years!" Pain is, well pain. If it is sudden and sharp, then don't be an idiot, stop! Yes, I've learned this the hard way (i.e. I've been an idiot).
19. **What if I don't get the timings exactly right?** That is ok. Just don't ruminate about it, especially if you have perfectionist tendencies. Remember it is about progress no perfection.
20. **Will I lose weight doing this?** No if that is your expectation then you will be sorely disappointed. If you want to lose weight then you need to read my Care and Feeding of the Leader's Weight paper and change what you eat. You can't exercise your way out of a poor diet.

Week1: Day 1

WU

3 min @IL1
2 min @IL2
1 min @IL3
2 min @IL2

MS

20 sec @IL 4/40 sec @IL2 x 5

BR

15 sec @IL 4/45 sec @IL1 x 5

CD

2 min @IL1

Week 1: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1
1 min @IL2
1 min @IL3
30 sec @IL2

MS

3min@IL3/20 sec @IL1+ x 3

BR

20 sec @IL 4/40 sec @IL1 x 5

CD

1.5 min @IL1

Week 1: Day 3

WU

2 min @IL1
2 min @IL2

MS

10 min @IL2+

BR

2 min @IL3/15 sec @IL1 x 3

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 2: Day 1

WU

3 min @IL1
2 min @IL2
1 min @IL3
2 min @IL2

MS

30 sec @IL 4/30 sec @IL1 x 5

BR

10 sec @IL 5/50 sec @IL1 x 5

CD

2 min @IL1

Week 2: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1
1 min @IL2
1 min @IL3
30 sec @IL2

MS

1 min @IL2/1 min @IL3/1 min @IL4/20sec @IL1 x 3

BR

20 sec @IL4/40 sec @IL2 x 5

CD

1.5 min @IL1

Week 2: Day 3

WU

1 min @IL1
2 min @IL2

MS

5 min @IL3/1min @IL1/4min @IL3/1min @IL2

BR

3min @IL3/10 sec @IL1 x 2

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 3: Day 1

WU

2 min @IL1

2 min @IL2

1 min @IL4

1 min @IL2

MS

10 sec @IL5/50 sec @IL2 x 5

BR

8 sec @IL5/40 sec @IL1 x 5

CD

2 min @IL2

2 min @IL1

Week 3: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1

1 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

30 sec @IL2

MS

2 min @IL3/30 sec @IL4/30 sec

@IL4+/30sec @IL1 x 3

BR

20 sec @IL4/40 sec @IL2 x 5

CD

1.5 min @IL1

Week 3: Day 3

WU

1 min @IL1

1 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

MS

11 min @IL3

BR

3min @IL3+/10 sec @IL1 x 2

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 4: Day 1

(repeat a week)

WU

3 min @IL1

2 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

2 min @IL2

MS

20 sec @IL4/40 sec @IL2 x 5

BR

15 sec @IL4/45 sec @IL2 x 5

CD

2 min @IL1

Week 4: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1

1 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

30 sec @IL2

MS

3min@IL3/20 sec @IL1.5 x 3

BR

20 sec @IL 4/40 sec @IL2 x 5

CD

1.5 min @IL1

Week 4: Day 3

WU

2 min @IL1

2 min @IL2

MS

10 min @IL3

BR

2 min @IL3/10 sec @IL1x3

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 5: Day 1

WU

2 min @IL1
2 min @IL2
1 min @IL4
1 min @IL2

MS

15 sec @IL5/45 sec @IL1 x 5

BR

10 sec @IL5/40 sec @IL1 x 5

CD

2 min @IL2
2 min @IL1

Week 5: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1
1 min @IL2
1 min @IL3
30 sec @IL2

MS

2 min @IL3, 30 sec @IL4, 30 sec @IL4+/30sec @IL1 x 3

BR

20 sec @IL4/40 sec @IL2 x 5

CD

1.5 min @IL1

Week 5: Day 3

WU

1 min @IL1
1 min @IL2
1 min @IL3

MS

11 min @IL3

BR

3min @IL3+/10 sec @IL1x2

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 6: Day 1

WU

1 min @IL1
2 min @IL2
1 min @IL4
1 min @IL2

MS

30 sec @IL4+/30 sec @IL1 x 6

BR

15 sec @IL5/30 sec @IL1 x 5

CD

3 min @IL1

Week 6: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1
1 min @IL2
2 min @IL3
30 sec @IL2

MS

2 min @IL3, 1 min @IL4/30sec @IL1 x 3

BR

1 min @IL4/30 sec @IL1 x 4

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 6: Day 3

WU

1 min @IL2
1 min @IL3
30 sec @IL1

MS

6 min @IL3/1 min @IL2/4 min @IL3/30 sec @IL1

BR

3min @IL3+/30 sec @IL1, 2 min @IL3/30 sec @IL1

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 7 (repeat week): Day 1

WU

3 min @IL1

2 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

2 min @IL2

MS

30 sec @IL 4/30 sec @IL2 x 5

BR

10 sec @IL 5/50 sec @IL1x5

CD

2 min @IL1

Week 7: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1

1 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

30 sec @IL2

MS

1 min @IL2/1 min @IL3/1 min

@IL4/20sec @IL1x3

BR

20 sec @IL4/40 sec @IL2x5

CD

1.5 min @IL1

Week 7: Day 3

WU

1 min @IL1

2 min @IL2

MS

5 min @IL3/1min @IL1/4min

@IL3/1min @IL2

BR

3min @IL3/10 sec @IL1 x 2

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 8: Day 1

WU

2 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

1 min @IL4

1 min @IL2

MS

40 sec @IL4+/20 sec @IL1 x 6

BR

15 sec @IL5/15 sec @IL1 x 6

CD

4 min @IL1

Week 8: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1

1 min @IL2

2 min @IL3

30 sec @IL2

30 sec @IL1

MS

3 min @IL3/30 sec @IL4/30sec

@IL1/2 min @IL3/30 sec

@IL4/30 sec @IL 1/1 min

@IL3/30 sec @IL4/30 sec @IL1

BR

2 min @IL3+/30 sec @IL2 x 4

CD

2 min @IL1

Week 8: Day 3

WU

1 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

30 sec @IL4

30 sec @IL2

MS

7 min @IL3, 4 min @IL3+

BR

30 sec @IL1

4min @IL3/30 sec @IL1 x 2

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 9: Day 1

WU

2 min @IL2
1 min @IL3
1 min @IL4
1 min @IL2

MS

20 sec @IL5/20 sec @IL1 x 3
1 min @IL2
30 sec @IL4/30 sec @IL4 x 3

BR

15 sec @IL5/30 sec @IL1x6

CD

4 min @IL1

Week 9: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1
1 min @IL2
2 min @IL3
30 sec @IL2
30 sec @IL1

MS

1 min @IL3/2 min @IL4/1 min @IL1x2

BR

2 min @IL3+/30 sec @IL2 x 4

CD

2 min @IL1

Week 9: Day 3

WU

1 min @IL2
1 min @IL3
30 sec @IL4
30 sec @IL2

MS

6 min @IL3/2 min @IL1/3 min @IL3

BR

30 sec @IL1

4min @IL3/30 sec @IL1 x 2

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 10: Day 1

WU

2 min @IL2
1 min @IL3
1 min @IL4
1 min @IL1

MS

1 min @IL4/2 min @IL2 x 3
20 sec @IL5/40 sec @IL1 x 2

BR

15 sec @IL5/30 sec @IL1x3

10 sec @IL5/20 sec @IL1x3

CD

2 min @IL1

Week 10: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1
1 min @IL2
1 min @IL3
30 sec @IL2
30 sec @IL1

MS

1 min @IL2, 1 min @IL3, 1 min @IL4, 30 sec @IL5/2 min @IL1 x 2

BR

2 min @IL3+/30 sec @IL1 x 4

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 10: Day 3

WU

1 min @IL2
1 min @IL3
1min @IL2

MS

5 min @IL3, 5 min @IL3+

BR

30 sec @IL1

2min @IL3/15 sec @IL1 x 3

CD

2 min @IL1

Week 11 (repeat week): Day 1

WU

2 min @IL1

2 min @IL2

1 min @IL4

1 min @IL2

MS

10 sec @IL5/50 sec @IL1 x 5

BR

8 sec @IL5/40 sec @IL1x5

CD

2 min @IL2

2 min @IL1

Week 11: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1

1 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

30 sec @IL2

MS

2 min @IL3, 30 sec @IL4, 30 sec

@IL4+/30sec @IL1 x 3

BR

20 sec @IL4/40 sec @IL2 x 5

CD

1.5 min @IL1

Week 11: Day 3

WU

1 min @IL1

1 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

MS

11 min @IL3

BR

3min @IL3+/10 sec @IL1x2

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 12: Day 1

WU

2 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

1 min @IL4

1 min @IL1

MS

1 min @IL4+/1 min @IL1 x 3

30 sec @IL5/30 sec@IL4 x 3

BR

15 sec @IL5/1 min @IL1x4

CD

1 min @IL1

Week 12: Day 2

WU

1 min @IL1

1 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

30 sec @IL2

30 sec @IL1

MS

45 sec @IL3, 30 sec@IL4, 30 sec

@IL4+, 15 sec @IL5,1 min @IL1x3

BR

5 min @IL3

CD

2 min @IL1

Week 12: Day 3

WU

1 min @IL1

1 min @IL2

1 min @IL3

1 min @IL2

MS

10 min @IL2+ or IL3

BR

30 sec @IL1, 2min @IL3 x 2

CD

1 min @IL1