

Cardio Zone Training

What intensity should you do your cardiovascular training? How fast should your heart be beating? We covered part of this in an earlier Resource, on “Build Your Cardio Plan”, but we are going in more detail here. If you want to lower your body fat or burn fat for fuel, your best exercise is “steady state” cardiovascular exercise, done at a low enough exercise intensity that it your body can perform the exercise “Aerobically” or “with oxygen”. I know you may not want to hear the truth, but “longer is better” for this type of fat burning exercise. You want to do a MINIMUM of 30 minutes per session. Higher intensity cardio exercise has its place. Adding some interval training to your program definitely has advantages and can help you break through a plateau, and higher intensity cardio can help improve over-all cardiovascular function.

For now, I’m going to tell you how to stay in what is commonly called the **FAT BURNING ZONE!** There are two ways to calculate your ideal heart rate for this type of exercise. One is by calculating your **Target Heart Rate (THR)** based on your age. The second one, and frankly the one I think is the most accurate if you are “tuned in” to your body is **Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE)**.

Target Heart Rate (THR) is calculated by using a percentage of your **MAXIMUM HEART RATE (MHR)**. MHR is calculated by taking the number 220, and subtracting your age. Example: A 50 year old male would take 220 and subtract 50; his Maximum Heart Rate would be 170 beats per minute. The American College of Sports Medicine suggests using 55% - 90% of your MHR as a THR for Exercise. To stay in the “steady state” or Fat burning Zone, generally you should stay between 60%-75%. Here’s a chart below to help you with this.

Zone Training Fat Burning = Low Intensity
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Cardio = High Intensity		
AGE	65% MHR	80% MHR
10	136	168
20	130	160
30	123	152
40	117	144
50	110	136
60	104	128
70	97	120
80	91	112
90	84	104
100	78	

Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) based on how hard you feel like you are working on a scale of 1-10. To get the maximum effect you should be working at about a “Level 7” meaning after your warm up you should be breathing hard and perspiring, but you are still able to carry on a conversation. You should be able to sustain this level of exercise for a longer period of time, longer than 30 minutes if desired. If you were to increase the intensity just a little bit more than you could no longer keep up a conversation.

Ideally you should use your THR (Target Heart Rate) as a guideline, and then modify as needed with RPE (Rate of Perceived Exertion). There are two big reasons for this:

- **Your Biological Age is not necessarily your Chronological Age.** This means you may be more or less “fit” than the “average” person in your age group. If you are more fit, you can, and should increase your intensity level. If you are less fit, or have a health challenge, you should adjust the intensity as needed for your current fitness level.
- **Every Day is Different.** If on a particular day it feels like you are working much harder to maintain your usual speed or intensity then you probably are. Adjust and notice what else might be going on in your life. Did you get enough sleep & are you well hydrated? Notice what else might be going on and ask your body what it needs.

Remember our UFQ Expert Tom Terwilliger talking about Body Rapport? Tune into the wisdom of your body – it really does have its own intelligence!

Always remember to enjoy the journey. Achieving, and MAINTAINING Optimal (or “ULTIMATE”) Health and Fitness is not a destination. It is a journey. Enjoy the ride and the benefits!

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