

By Paul and Carolyn Fetters



Slowing the Aging Process with Interval Training

I know you have heard me before write about the importance of becoming more active, let's talk more about why. All of us will age, and you can't do anything about it. Your hair gets gray, gravity takes its toll, your maximum heart-rate declines, and your skin degenerates regardless of lifestyle. You will look old, no matter what. However, you don't have to act old or feel old and that's what counts!

Dr. Henry S. Lodge, M.D. states that some 70% of premature death and aging is lifestyle related. Heart attacks, strokes, the most common cancers, diabetes, most falls, fractures and serious injuries, and many more illnesses are primarily caused by the way we live. So how should we live? It starts by exercise. Our bodies are made for movement, not sitting around in front of a tv, computer, game board, etc.. One thing we know is that what you don't use you lose.

Let's look at muscle. Your body is discarding and building new cells within the muscles daily. You are telling your body to either build these cells stronger or weaker by your activity level. When you lift weights and push your muscles, they (the cells within the muscle) respond by becoming stronger. In 3 months, every cell in your muscles have been replaced with these new stronger cells. You can literally change the capability of your muscles by 100% in three months!

On the other hand, if you neglect your exercising and your muscle completely for 3 months you have sent a message to those same cells to come in weaker and decay. It's really that simple. What is the message you would like to send to all the different parts of you body, including internally? Become stronger or weaker?

If I can get a little more technical. Recent research shows that regular aerobic and strength exercises can decrease biological age by 10 years or more (Shephard 2008). One of the ways aerobic and strength exercise decreases biological age is by improving mitochondria function within the muscle. Mitochondria in cells are organelles that are responsible for energy production. They use oxygen to burn fat or glucose (bloodsugar) as energy within the muscle. Cells can produce more energy when mitochondria are efficient. It's all about making more energy in the muscle, that means building more mitochondria and bringing them more fuel and oxygen, we do that by exercising the muscle. When we exercise the mitochondria function is made more efficient, the cells regenerate and function at a higher level for a longer period of time. The best part is, the harder a person exercises, the greater the mitochondrial changes, leading to a bigger reduction in biological age over the life span. We have found that interval training is one of the most effective



ways to exercise at a high enough intensity to increase oxygen demands and ultimately slow aging. Interval training consists of short bursts of training hard followed by brief periods of recovery. We find that weight training is one of the most efficient and safe ways to train your body and systems to build muscle and stamina. The challenge for our fitness professionals is how to exercise clients at a high enough intensity, yet do so safely and within each client's limitations. Interval training is the easiest and most effective way to incorporate high-intensity exercise into any exercise program. The key is to choose exercises that use large muscles, and the exercises are done in a way that is biomechanically correct and will get the heart pumping.

I don't know how you are feeling at this point. I would hope if you are not currently doing anything for yourself physically, you will make a realistic assessment of the shape you're in today and then make a start that fits your condition. If you start too easy you will get bored. Start too hard and you will quit or worse, hurt yourself. The most important part is to start! Remember, we control how we age. Will you choose to be sedentary, withdrawing from social contact and eating everything in sight? Or, choose daily exercise, emotional commitment, reasonable nutrition, and a real engagement with living.

You decide, but it's important to Just Decide.

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