

Do Anywhere 5-minute Workouts

By Jill Coleman

Fitness is becoming more and more mobile, with outdoor bootcamps, in-home personal training and corporate fitness centers coming on line. Gyms are great for housing machines and giving beginners some tools with which to work; however, for exercisers who do not want to join a gym or who have very little time, there are newer, quicker, more effective ways to fit in daily activity. More and more people are becoming obese, time-starved and resource-deficient when it comes to exercise. However, not having a gym membership is no longer an excuse to avoid exercise. Though you may have to creatively pull from your surroundings, there are plenty of convenient options for working out anywhere, anytime and generating real results with minimal time.

Short-duration, High-intensity Exercise Improves Body Composition

Many personal trainers refer to HIIT or high-intensity interval training as a great way to spice up the traditional mundane cardio workout. By alternating between short bouts of high intensity exercise (lasting seconds to minutes), with resting intervals, HIIT can be fun to incorporate into a daily workout regimen as a change of pace; however HIIT principles go far beyond offering variety. HIIT not only packs a huge metabolic punch in a short amount of time, but there is scientific evidence to show that a single short-duration, high-intensity workout (as short as 1-5 minutes!) not only burns more fat and calories *during* the workout, but also post-workout. Several exercise scientists point to the fact that scientific research shows that “even a single 1-minute bout of supramaximal (above 100% VO₂ max) effort can spike the metabolism enough to create a significant fat-burning ripple effect lasting hours.” EPOC or excess post-exercise oxygen consumption refers to the higher metabolic rate enjoyed by an efficient exerciser *after* the workout is over (“afterburn”). Luckily, the primary way to manipulate the amount of EPOC experienced is through intensity, and contrary to popular belief, *not* duration. Long duration, continuous “cardio” exercise is not only inferior to HIIT in terms of body composition effects, but also leaves today’s time-starved exerciser chained to a treadmill practicing a modality that, in effect, burns *less* calories, *less* fat and *more* time. It would follow then, that in order to maximize intensity, there is no choice but to minimize duration. Besides, an individual can sprint much faster for 10 seconds than he or she can for 10 minutes, all the while achieving even greater metabolic gains. Though it is easy to equate duration with increased fat loss, consider intensity instead. HIIT is a superior form of exercise for fat burning and functionality, as has been shown in several pivotal studies, including the following landmark study.

Over 14 years ago, researchers at Laval University in Québec, Canada began looking at this type of training (short-duration, high-intensity) as opposed to the more popular long-duration jogging and aerobics of the time. Volume 43 of the journal *Metabolism* in 1994 published this study, which examined two groups of exercisers. One group participated in a 20-week endurance training protocol that called for long, slow bouts of exercise, while the second group completed only 15 weeks of HIIT. The endurance training group burned double the calories of the HIIT group. However, the HIIT

experienced a 9-fold reduction in subcutaneous fat deposition over the endurance training group. Moreover, the HIIT group had elevated levels of the fat-burning enzyme 3-hydroxyacyl coenzyme A dehydrogenase (HADH), illustrating the powerful point that this group of individuals were becoming more efficient fat-burners while participating in shorter, highly-intense exercise, as opposed to the long-duration group who experienced no elevation of this enzyme's activity.

Performing intense 5-minute workouts once or multiple times per day not only helps enhance these fat-burning effects, but also creates more opportunities for EPOC. A single exercise bout will create a state of EPOC that may last minutes or hours, based on the intensity of the workout. However, shorter, more frequent bouts will exponentiate EPOC so that an individual burns for longer and more strongly. It is like similar to adding fuel to a burning fire throughout the day. Lastly, shorter duration exercise also has a built-in motivational factor—it's over quicker! This fact eliminates the looming dread of an hour spent on the elliptical after a long day at work. Instead, rest assured that quicker, more intense workouts will leave you burning fat for hours after the workout is over, hopefully right into your next session. And surprisingly enough, you will enjoy an overall more energetic feeling by intensely *expending* energy through shorter sessions.

Mobility of Exercise

For the first time ever, fitness center membership sales went down in 2005. Time-starved individuals are either finding other ways to squeeze in fitness, or they are simply not exercising. At the same time, people are demanding more exercise options: a fact that explains the recent surge of corporate fitness centers, at-home personal training, exercise DVDs and outdoor exercise opportunities like triathlon and 5k training groups. Exercise is becoming mobile. However, the biggest challenge posed by workouts away from the comfort of selectorized machines is having the know-how. Someone may have all the latest gimmicks and gizmos, but without a clear workout protocol of exercises, sets, reps and weight, how does one begin?

Putting it together

Shorter, intense exercise bouts can be performed anywhere and with no equipment. The first step in creating a quick workout is to scope out the surroundings. If you are near a school, use the track or stadium steps. If you are near a park, look for staircases, low walls and short, steep incline paths. In a backyard, make sure there is some room to sprint or a walkway to lunge-walk, such as you may find with a long driveway. Many exercises can be performed using bodyweight only. For example, push-ups, dips, step-ups and squats are some staples. Advanced trainees can ramp up the intensity by incorporating plyometrics or "jumping" movements like squat jumps, switch ups and bench jumps. Throw in a little sprinting and some pulsing or half-reps and you can achieve an intense full-body workout anywhere. Since the workout must be time-sensitive, each exercise will be performed for an allotted amount of time, not using reps or sets. Instead, the goal is to complete as many repetitions in the allotted time, keeping tight form, before moving onto the next exercise. Here are some sample 5-minute workouts you can do anywhere:

Workout #1 – Leg Heavy (equipment needed: low wall or bench)

Exercise	Time	Comments
Squat-Lunge-Squat	60 sec	Alternate lunging and squatting (alternate lunge legs)
Pulsing Squat	30 sec	Stay at bottom of squat, move 1 inch up & down continuously
Squat Jumps	30 sec	Explosive plyometric exercise; beginners can simply squat
Sprint (all out effort)	10 sec	Use a driveway or a road
Walking Lunge	30 sec	Alternate lunge legs, walk forward
Sprint (all out effort)	10 sec	
Walking Lunge	30 sec	
Sprint (all out effort)	10 sec	
Step-ups	60 sec	Use bench or low wall, alternate legs
Switch Jumps	30 sec	Plyometric; begin in lunge position, jump up & change legs in air

Workout #2 – Upper Body and Cardio (equipment needed: low wall or bench)

Exercise	Time	Comments
Push-ups	30 sec	Go to knees when they get difficult, beginners start on knees
Close-grip Push-ups	30 sec	Place hands directly under shoulders, go from knees
Dips	30 sec	Use bench or low wall
Squat	30 sec	Try to get knees 90 degrees at the bottom, keep weight in heels
½ Rep Squats	30 sec	Do squats from the bottom to ½ way up, and back down
Sprint (all out effort)	20 sec	Use driveway or road
Rest	10 sec	Walk slowly
Sprint (all out effort)	20 sec	
Rest	10 sec	
Push-ups	30 sec	
Close-grip Push-ups	30 sec	
Dips	30 sec	

Workout #3 – Full Body Blast (equipment needed: none)

Exercise	Time	Comments
Walking Lunge	30 sec	Walk w/ arms held straight out to the side (static lateral raise)
Walking Lunge	30 sec	Walk w/ alternating overhead presses
Walking Lunge	30 sec	Walk w/ arms held straight up overhead (static shoulder press)
Walking Lunge	30 sec	Alternate punching arms in front of body
Walking Lunge	60 sec	Bring chest to front knee each lunge, try to touch back knee to ground
Squat Thrust	30 sec	“Burpee;” jump down into push-up position and then stand back up
Squat Thrust w/ push-up	30 sec	Add push-up at the bottom
Squat Thrust w/ push-up & squat jump	30 sec	Add push-up at bottom, squat jump at top
Sprint (all out effort)	30 sec	Use driveway or road

Remember that the only caveat to shorter workouts is that they must be intense to generate results. Sprints are not fast jogs; they are panting-out-of-breath bouts of all-out exertion. Squats should be low and lunges should be deep. Since the workouts do not require any weight, it is important to contract the muscles as if you had weight. For example, squeeze the shoulders as you hold them out in a static lateral raise; squeeze the glutes together as you complete each squat and strive to touch your chest to the ground on push-ups, utilizing the full range of motion of each exercise. Finally, remember to stay safe and listen to your body. High-intensity workouts should and will push you beyond your comfort zone, but be sure to take short rests if you need and adjust exercises as you see fit. Besides, the ultimate goal is to not only generate great fat-burning results, but also be left feeling accomplished and excited for your next 5-minute exercise session! Short *and* sweet! 😊