

“AFTERBURN”!

Have you ever heard the fancy term “EPOC” that some exercise physiologists throw around? EPOC is the acronym for Excess Post Oxygen Consumption. Ever heard the term “afterburn”? Afterburn does a nice job of explaining what EPOC is. EPOC means that after a workout, your oxygen consumption is up above the level it was before you started exercising, and it does this so your body can recover and return to pre-exercise status. Why is this important? Let me explain...

We have an obesity crisis in this country, as we all know, and MOST Americans are battling their weight. We runners know a simple solution... RUN! It helps, and there is no doubt about that. But the more help the better, and afterburn can help.

There is a lot of debate that goes on between which is a better workout method: LSD (long slow distance) or intervals. In running, we know both have their spot and both are highly productive. But in the weight/fat loss circles, there is much debate about this. In order to lose weight, energy in must be less than energy out, and there is no getting around that. But what is better for working out aerobically for someone trying to lose weight, LSD or intervals? Again, both have a role. The proponents of LSD training argue that at lower intensities we're burning more fat for fuel, and this is true. But with that lower intensity comes a lower calorie output. So that's a wash. The proponents of interval style training state that they will burn more calories per minute at higher intensities, which is true, but also true is that less of a percentage of fat is burned---at the time. When it's all said and done, both styles of training will produce the same net calories burned in total and from fat. So they're equal? Well, no. They're equal in the deficit that is created from the actual exercise time spent---but afterburn is an after-special, and that is.....

Where intervals have a special place above LSD training is not the affect that is caused DURING exercise, but the time spent afterwards. After a LSD training session, your body pretty much returns to normal very quickly. This means your metabolic rate returns to normal very quickly after this type of training. But not so with intensity training or interval training. Your body can actually be revved up for hours after a high intensity workout, burning more calories at rest than normal. Much more! And this is the case due to EPOC. The harder you train, the more elevated your volume of oxygen is after a workout, and this takes far more time to recover. And as your body is trying to recover, it is burning calories to do this. So when it comes to this, intervals do have a leg up, so to say.

Having said all this, it doesn't mean that you should only train this way. In fact, that's the problem with interval training. You really have to limit how much you do or you WILL get overtrained. LSD training can be done daily without much repercussion at all. But to be smart, interval training should be done no more than a few times per week on non-consecutive days, with two days probably being better. So, there is no doubt that when it comes to fat loss, interval training is a more productive mode of choice, but LSD has a very valuable role as well, so really they are perfect partners.

A well thought out cardio workout program for fat loss includes both LSD training and interval training. What may be new to a lot of you is how valuable interval training is for fat loss. A few days of LSD training and a couple days of interval training per week should be just what the doctor ordered for fat loss (and don't forget strength training!). If you have orthopedic issues or if you've been sedentary for a while, you'll have to ease into interval training very slowly. You don't need to start out like gangbusters. Listen to your body, and start slowly and build, and very soon you can be up where you need to be. But if you start out too fast, you could injure yourself and have to start over, and that's never fun!

Good luck and happy fat loss!