Education

The Importance of Steady-State Cardio

All types of physical activity are beneficial to the body. However, each form or level of intensity brings a different aspect to your physical health. For instance, high intensity interval training (HIIT) tends to burn more calories during and after the workout. This is not the only intensity level valuable to the body. What about a continuous, steady intensity of cardiovascular exercise, otherwise known at *steady-state cardio*? Though you may not feel like you are working as hard as a HIIT workout, there are still some advantages to exercising at a low- to moderate-intensity with steady-state cardio.

Building Endurance

Steady-state cardio can be an effective method of building cardiovascular and muscular endurance. Steady-state cardio is most commonly known for improving your cardiovascular endurance by increasing your lung capacity and blood circulation while also decreasing your resting heart rate for better cardiac health.

While sprinting and high-intensity exercise can be helpful for building muscle, long sessions of low- to moderate-intensity cardio are superior for muscular endurance as they provide a high number of repetitions, such as steps or cycle pedal strokes.

Appetite Control

Do not fall into the, "I burned it, I earned it," trap. Maintaining a steady-state intensity can actually help you from feeling like you "earned" that bowl of ice cream after dinner. A study by *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that the subjects ate more after a high-intensity session versus those who performed at a lower intensity.

The American Journal of Physiology: Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology found that a 60-minute session of steady-state cardio increased the release of a appetite-blunting hormone and decreased the release of a hunger-promoting hormone.

Reduce the Risk of Injury

Training at a high-intensity all the time may wear down your body faster, reduce your energy levels and increase your risk of developing an injury during your workout. *American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)* has established guidelines that recommend aiming for at least 5 days each week of a combination of low- to moderate- and high-intensity exercise. *ACSM* also stated that if high-intensity exercise is performed more than five days a week, you are in danger of overtraining and diminishing your hard work.

Steady-state cardio is also a great recovery workout, even on your "rest day". Low- to moderate- intensity allows your body to take a break while still keeping you active. This active-recovery may even help reduce muscle soreness and oil your joints for better range of motion and mobility.

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Better Blood Sugar and Insulin Levels

Steady-state cardio should always be a part of your workout regimen not only to increase your fitness levels, but also to improve your physiological levels, including lowering blood sugar and increasing insulin sensitivity. A recent study by *Applied Physiology, Nutrition and Metabolism* found that steady-state cardio increases your insulin sensitivity by using any excess blood sugar as energy during the workout. This also helps control your insulin levels from rapidly increasing or decreasing throughout the rest of the day. Another study even showed that steady-state cardio can decrease your blood sugar levels as much as 50 percent in the 24 hours following your workout.

Ready to start adding steady-state cardio to your workout regimen? *ACSM* recommends at least 30 minutes of any type of steady-state cardio. Try the "roller coaster" format by alternating between HIIT workouts (high-intensity) and steady-state cardio (low- to moderate-intensity), and low-intensity days counting as your active recovery. The key is finding a good balance between all intensities to create the ultimate workout regimen customized to your wants and needs!

References:

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