

Six reasons why aerobic work is counterproductive

As a Strength Coach and a Personal Trainer for 15 years, I've had a chance to see many fitness enthusiasts workout at many gyms in my local area and throughout the country. At any given gym or fitness center, the one thing that I notice is how you see the same people doing the same workouts month after month, year after year. The amazing thing is that these people continue to look the same or they are actually looking worse aesthetically. This is especially true with the constant performance of continuous aerobic work.

What's sad about this is that they feel like they are doing everything necessary to get the result they are looking for. They are resigned to the fact that this is how it's going to be and there isn't anything that can be done to correct their deficiencies. If you were to ask them what results they would like to get out of their workout, the number 1 answer is "losing weight or getting thinner."

When I am asked what it takes to look "fitter," the first question I ask is: "How long have you been doing your current training program?"

The usual answer I receive is "somewhere between 6 and 12 months." The typical program they follow is "30 – 60 minutes of continuous aerobic work 3 to 5 times per week."

Our training tells us that this is not a good approach to take for the client seeking improving results over time. World renowned strength guru Charles Poliquin has identified 6 reasons why aerobic training is counterproductive to fat loss:

- 1. Continuous aerobic work plateaus after 8 weeks of training so anything more is counterproductive.**

This is quite an "eye opener" for most people who immediately recognize that they may have been wasting their time for such an extended period. To quote Charles, "using this principle in preparation for the 92 Olympics, the Canadian Alpine Ski team actually surpassed the Cross-country team on aerobic scores as measured by third party University labs." Who wouldn't want to perform as well as the Canadian Alpine ski team?

- 2. Aerobic training worsens power locally and systemically – in other words, it can make you slower.**

If you are an athlete or a "weekend warrior" who likes to participate in athletic events or team sports that require speed and jumping ability, this is the last thing you want from a cardiovascular training program. Coach Poliquin adds that "the more lower body aerobic work you do, the more your vertical jump worsens. The more upper body aerobic work you do, the more your medicine ball throws worsen."

- 3. Aerobic training increases oxidative stress which can accelerate aging.**

According to Endocrinologist Dr. Diana Schwarzbein (author of The Schwarzbein Principle II,) "oxidation" is a process that forms free radicals in the body. Normally the body can neutralize free radicals with substances known as antioxidants. It is only when there is an excessive build-up of free radicals that the body cannot neutralize all of the free radicals. This leads to changes to your metabolism which can accelerate aging.

4. Aerobic training increases adrenal stress which can make you fatter and produce other undesirable health consequences

According to Dr. James Wilson (author of Adrenal Fatigue – The 21st. Century Stress Syndrome,) “normally functioning adrenal glands secrete minute, yet precise and balanced, amounts of steroid hormones”. When one does too much continuous aerobic exercise, the adrenal glands are stressed in a way that can upset this delicate balance which could lead to adrenal fatigue. Adrenal fatigue is associated with such symptoms as: tiredness, fearfulness, allergies, frequent influenza, arthritis, anxiety, depression, reduced memory, and difficulties in concentrating, insomnia, feeling worn-out, and most importantly- with respect to this article - the inability to lose weight after extensive efforts.”

5. Aerobic training increases body fat in stressed individuals by contributing additional stress.

If you are already going through a lot of stress in your life then adding more “stress” by doing too much continuous aerobic work will actually add more body fat thus making it hard to reach a weight-loss/body fat goal.

6. Aerobic training worsens testosterone/cortisol ratio which impedes your ability to add fat burning lean muscle.

When the testosterone/cortisol ratio is lowered your ability to add lean muscle tissue, which helps to increase caloric expenditure, is again hampered making weight loss much more difficult. Coach Poliquin notes that “continuous aerobic work is basically exercise induced castration!”