

Short, intense bursts of exercise could be better for our health than longer intervals

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Spending 2 minutes 30 seconds exercising at a high level of intensity, could be better at protecting the body against risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease (CVD) than longer sessions of less intense exercise, claimed experts at the British Science Festival today.

The ability of the body to deal with fat following a high-fat meal is a marker for the likelihood that a person will develop CVD in the future. The faster the body is able to get rid of the fat in the blood following a

high-fat meal, the less at risk that person is of developing CVD - for example atherosclerosis, which is the build up of fat within the blood vessels.

A study led by Dr Stuart Gray, from the University of Aberdeen's Musculoskeletal Research Programme asked participants to undertake 2.5 minutes of high-[intensity exercise](#) - 5 x 30 second sprints exerting themselves to their maximum ability with 4 minutes of rest between each sprint - before eating a high-fat meal.

Findings of the study—published in *Clinical Science*—showed the fat content in the blood of these participants after that meal was reduced by 33% compared to if they had not undertaken any exercise.

The [fat content](#) in the blood is only reduced by 11% if a moderate intensity [exercise session](#) - 30 minutes of [brisk walking](#) - is undertaken before the same meal is eaten.

Dr Gray said: "Although [moderate intensity](#), longer sessions of exercise can help protect the body against CVD, the findings of our study showed that high-intensity shorter intervals of exercise might be a more effective method to improve health and reduce the time commitment to exercise. "This is highly important as time is often cited as the main barrier to taking part in exercise.

"We are now investigating how long the benefits of a short high-intensity exercise session last on the body to analyse how frequently a person should exercise at this level to help protect the body against CVD. Our initial findings suggest that this type of exercise session would need to be undertaken on most days of the week to maintain the associated health benefits for the body."

Provided by University of Aberdeen

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