



Target Heart Rate and Weight Loss

Have you ever met women who have told you how hard they work out at the gym, but it seemed to no avail? They do an intensive cardio work-out routine 5 days per week, but are still not shedding the pounds nor toning up. Well, there may be factors other than genetics, which are overlooked by women who are told “no pain, no gain”. There are important factors that women should know about themselves when beginning a workout routine.

The first thing is your **Target Heart Rate**. Determining your target heart rate (THR) can help you to know if you are working out in a low intensity mode or high intensity mode, or even beyond. If you go beyond your THR you are more than likely burning muscle rather than fat and losing the battle against the bulge.

It is true that cardio exercise is a key factor in helping you to lose weight. But knowing where you are within your ‘fat burning’ zone can make all the difference in the world. If you are in your ‘fat burning’ zone, but at a lower intensity you may not be burning as many calories as you could be if you were at a higher intensity. The body is capable of burning “fat” calories during a lower intensity workout; however, at a higher intensity the body will burn more “overall” calories. Because it is more difficult to maintain a high intensity for a long period of time, it is best to incorporate an endurance program with “short intervals” of high intensity throughout your routine. Before doing this type of exercise consult your physician, especially if you are taking medications or are having any specific health problems. The next step is to figure out what your target heart rate is.

Determining Your Target Heart Rate

You can figure out your target heart rate by using the Karvonen Method. Any target heart rate calculator will do, but the Karvonen unlike the others incorporates your resting heart rate, which makes it more accurate.

The Karvonen Method is a mathematical formula to help you determine your target heart rate. You will need to know your maximum heart rate and your resting heart rate.

First, in the morning upon rising or after resting from activity take your pulse for one full minute and write down your resting heart rate.

To determine your maximum heart rate (MHR) which is commonly 220 – your age; we will use a more accurate formula according to a study published in the journal, “Medicine & Science in

Sports & Exercise, is $206.9 - (0.67 \times \text{age})$. For example $0.67 \times 49 = 32.83$. So you would take 206.9 minus $32.83 = 174.07$.

Below is a sample formula of a 49 year old woman.

$$206.9 - (0.67 \times 49 \text{ (age)}) = 174.07$$

$$174.07 - 71 \text{ (resting heart rate)} = 103.07$$

$$103.07 \times 65\% \text{ intensity (low end of heart rate)} = 66.9$$

$$103.07 \times 85\% \text{ intensity (high end of heart rate)} = 87.60$$

$$66.9 + 71 \text{ (resting heart rate)} = 137.9$$

$$87.60 + 71 \text{ (resting heart rate)} = 158.6$$

The target heart rate zone for this woman would be 137.9 to 158.6

This 49 year old lady would need to stay around 137.9 beats per minute (bpm) or lower to stay within her ‘fat burning’ zone. This is considered a low intensity workout that will burn fat calories. And to be in a high intensity cardio zone, she would need to take her heart rate above 137.9 to burn more overall calories. If she goes above her target heart rate of 158.6, her body will begin to burn muscle not fat.

Interval Workouts to Burn More Calories

Interval workouts are a great way to burn more calories without killing yourself with a full-out high intensity cardio workout, especially if you are just beginning to get into condition. The basic idea is to add some high intensity intervals to your regular workout. If you are a walker, add a thirty-second jog in-between your walking every minute or two. If you ride a bike, rev it up a bit every few minutes; perhaps not your resistance at first, but your intensity. Make sure you completely recover before your next interval. In four to six weeks time you should be able to turn up your intensity throughout your workout. This not only will help to increase your overall calorie burning, but will also increase your endurance. It is recommended to keep your high intensity interval training sessions to two per week initially to avoid injury or overtraining.

Get Moving Every Day

In order to get the maximum benefits exercise has to offer, and to get the weight off sensibly, you should try to exercise seven days a week. If that is too much because of your busy schedule, then try to get in four to six days per week. Most experts recommend a cardio workout of at least 60 minutes or more of moderate intensity or interval training. If you are a beginner, then start with 20 minutes per day or four to six days per week and build yourself up to 60 minutes per workout. Jillian Michaels of *The Biggest Loser* says the key thing to remember is “calories in, calories out.” So if you are consuming calories, you are going to want to burn some of those off to lose fat, and build muscle.