Playing the Circuit

Rev up your workout with circuit training.

April 1, 2008 By Laura Whitehorn

We don't know about you, but we're tired of the same old gym routine. So we asked HIV-positive trainer Jeffrey Gross to suggest an efficient and time-saving workout. His choice: circuit training. The regimen jets you from one set of muscles to another with little or no rest in between, boosting endurance. It raises your heart rate and keeps it up, for cardio-vascular fitness. (It's so effective, you should start slow—Gross says some of his clients become dizzy the first time.) Building endurance can toughen your immune system to withstand the wear and tear of life with HIV. And if you're weak or fatigued, Gross says, don't count yourself out: Circuit training can help address those problems, too.

You can circuit train at home using dumbbells, but a gym's machines provide more options. Set the weight for each, then just move from station to station. Choose machines close together to avoid losing rhythm. One round makes a circuit; then rest and start over. First warm up and stretch (Gross suggests 10 minutes on a treadmill).

Pick the circuit:
Gross picks this routine, moving from large- to small-muscle groups:

Station 1 Chest press or fly machine
Station 2 Squats (any machine)
Station 3 Back (lat pull downs or T-bar row)
Station 4 Abdominals (any machine or a stability ball)
Station 5 Shoulder press or lateral raise machine
Station 6 Leg curls (any machine)
Station 7 Biceps (any machine)
Station 8 Triceps (any machine)
Station 9 Calves (any machine)
Station 10 Back (any machine other than the one at station 3)

Begin with three or four of these, adding others in future sessions. People with fatigue or muscle weakness can stick with fewer stations and reps.

Set the weights:
Choose weight for each machine by seeing what you can manage for one rep. Then divide that number in half and set the weight a little beneath that. If you can press 120 pounds once, try setting the chest machine to 50 pounds. You'll do multiple reps on each machine—you can always add weight later.

Crunch the numbers:
Do 12 to 20 reps on each machine.
Rest zero to 10 seconds between stations.
Rest three to four minutes between circuits.
Perform two to three circuits.

This will take about 30 minutes. Do your routine two or three times weekly for about 12 weeks, then move to another form of exercise to keep challenging your body for continued improvement.

Don't expect Reggie Bush's quads in two weeks. Gross urges patience and persistence for best results. Remember, what goes around comes around.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/circuit-training-endurance-14226-2687