

Health Help

Q *Is high-intensity interval training (HIIT) bad for my back and knees?*



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HIIT is a physically demanding exercise regime that involves alternating intense anaerobic exercises with less intense recovery periods. This is good for cardiovascular fitness and muscle strengthening, but a person may suffer injuries of the knee or back due to the intense repetitive actions.

In general, when you first start HIIT, select the less dynamic exercises such as planks, single arm and leg raises, and slow abdominal crunches. These help to tone the muscles first, to protect your joints when you progress to more dynamic exercises. You can do these exercises for about two to three weeks, then progress to more dynamic exercises such as jumping jacks, half squats and burpees.



If you've had a back or knee injury before, then you'd need to be more careful when stepping up your exercises; take note if you feel any aches or pains. Wearing an elastic knee guard is a good way to help protect the knees during these exercises.

Also, as the body undergoes natural wear-and-tear with ageing, older people starting HIIT should aim for a more gentle start, and a more gradual increase in intensity and duration of the exercises. It's never a good idea to jump straight into HIIT without a gradual start.

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