

# Short and sweet

Good's digital editor **NATALIE CYRA** finds out if you can get fit in just 30 minutes



Fancy working out for just 21 minutes a week? A recent BBC Horizon documentary, *The Truth About Exercise: Is Three Minutes of Exercise Enough?*, tested the theory and decided 'yes'. Their research focussed on HIIT, or High Intensity Interval Training, a fitness method all about working at full intensity in bursts, combined with short recovery breaks. This way of working out is nothing new, but the research supporting it is. Science suggests that instead of slogging it out on a cross trainer for hours each day, this short and sweet form of exercise can have major health and fitness benefits.

A study published in *The Journal of Physiology* even suggests that HIIT might be a more effective form of exercise than continuous moderate activity for improving cardiovascular, respiratory, metabolic and muscular functions, with a time commitment of just a few minutes each day.

## Putting it to the test

BodyTech Gym in Auckland run a Supervised Strength Circuit HIIT class, which seemed worth a go. In

30 minutes, I used eight machines in a full-body programme that worked my abs, hamstrings, shoulders, laterals (the muscles down the side of your back) and more, completing 8-12 reps on each body part, with my rest being the 10 seconds allowed for moving between stations. Talking with BodyTech's fitness manager, Andrew Jefferys, made me realise why HIIT is becoming so popular: "It lets you go and live your normal life," he says, and he's right. The 'I just don't have time to get a workout in' excuse doesn't cut it when an HIIT class can be completed in a matter of minutes. And while I felt like I'd been 'hiit' by a bus, because I worked so hard, it's that intensity level that gets you the results.

## Work it, reap the rewards

The Supervised Strength HIIT session I attended at BodyTech guarantees that if I work at an intense rate for just 30 minutes or less, three times a week, I can achieve a 10 percent improvement in flexibility and increase my cardio stamina up to four times more than with a traditional workout. I'll also lose up to 1.5kg of fat, while gaining

one kilogram of muscle – in around six weeks. I'll also be more mobile and flexible, my metabolic resting rate increases (burning more calories while I'm sitting at my desk) and my muscles and joints get stronger, lowering the risk of future injuries. "There's a lot of research that shows it is intensity that stimulates change. It's about making sure every single repetition you do is effective. That old thought of having to go to the gym for hours on end and do all of these different things, five days a week, will still get you results, but if you choose to work smarter and harder, you can reap the same rewards," says Andrew. It seems that, like so many other things in life, the phrase 'quality not quantity' applies here, too.

It's important to add that you don't have to be Sly Stallone to take part in HIIT – exercises can be adjusted and altered to reflect and match your individual ability. If you're not into the gym, weight-bearing exercises such as press-ups, chin-ups, lunges and wall-sits will all increase your heart rate and, if done intensely and properly, can make a great HIIT circuit. 