



# GET *fit fast*

*Exercise experts weigh in on the latest research to help you find the perfect fitness plan.*

BY EMILIE DINGFELD

GLORIA ROHEIM McRAE ARRIVES at Equinox fitness centre in Toronto for a sweat session with her personal trainer, Eva Redpath. A five-foot-two brunette with a killer pixie cut, Roheim McRae is a busy entrepreneur: At 29, she co-owns a digital strategy company with her husband and is the author of *BYOB: The Unapologetic Guide to Being Your Own Boss*. This means many hours at the computer and not enough sleep—last night she got only four hours' worth. Despite her fatigue, she's committed to fitness. "I take care of this enterprise," she says, gesturing toward her toned, curvy body, "so I can take care of my enterprise." Like many who are juggling life's to-do list, Roheim McRae wants to be healthy, trim and in shape. What does she do?

## Why HIIT's a hit

On her agenda today is a Tabata workout. Redpath, an ebullient blonde who is Equinox's Signature Program Presenter, leads Roheim McRae through a series of gruelling exercises that takes only 16 minutes to complete. (Seriously!)

Tabata falls under the umbrella of High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), a type of workout renowned for its efficiency. Each exercise (for instance, jump squats) is done for 20 seconds straight with full-out intensity, followed by a 10-second rest. Then, that cycle is repeated seven times (for four minutes total). Roheim McRae is doing four Tabata exercises in her workout.

Sounds easy enough, but according to personal trainer Leo Daniel Ryan of Body →

## DEAL BREAKERS

*Glow readers get advice from top trainers about why their workouts are failing them and how to get the results they want.* BY LISA HANNAM

### CHRISTINE PIVATT @Christinekiki48

Pivatt, 41, works out at least five days a week, trying to get her five-foot-four, 133-pound frame lean and toned. "I have to face it," says the accountant. "My youngest is five years old, so the window for blaming the mummy tummy on the kids has closed." She also wants a smaller butt, toned thighs and stronger arms. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, she goes to a boot camp class that mixes cardio with light weights. On Tuesdays, she takes a jazz dance class. ("That's more a brain exercise for my two left feet," she jokes.) On Thursday mornings, she does sprints on the treadmill for about 30 minutes. "On the weekends, I aim to run for about an hour, depending on my motivation and time available."

**The expert:** Courtney Prather, certified trainer in Los Angeles and Lionsgate BeFit Go Fitness Expert at [youtube.com/befit](http://youtube.com/befit)

Pivatt might be spinning her proverbial wheels, suggests Prather. "Between cardio boot camp classes, running, dance and treadmill sprints, she's doing more than six hours of cardio a week!" Pivatt might think this is the way to lean out and get the body of her dreams, but Prather says it's doing the opposite. "Excessive cardio has been shown to decrease efficient fat metabolism, increase cortisol [the stress hormone] and increase inflammation," she says, adding that her cardio program could be burning muscle tissue for fuel instead of body fat. What should Pivatt do? Lift weights ("heavier than a purse") until her muscles are fatigued—between 10 and 12 reps. "She doesn't need to spend hours doing cardio. Short but intense workouts that get the heart pumping and build long, lean muscles will keep her burning more fat around the clock."

### JULIA SCENNA @juscxo

Runners tend to be slim, and that's the look that Scenna, 25, is aiming for. After getting bored of the elliptical, she started running to burn off some extra weight. "Now I run three to four times a week and try to do at least 4K," says Julia, who runs at a park and on a treadmill, and practises yoga. She's frustrated with her weight-loss progress, though: "My goal is to lose 25 pounds and I've probably lost about six." The five-foot-two music publicist weighs

& Soul Fitness in Toronto, to do Tabata properly, you have to give it all you've got, and then some. "The point isn't to reach the end of the eight sets. It's to go as hard as you can," he says. "If you feel okay at the end, you haven't done it right."

Many exercise slackers rejoiced when research published in the American College of Sports Medicine's *Health and Fitness Journal* showed how less can be more. The study reported that a simple seven-minute high-intensity training program could yield impressive results by simultaneously working the cardiovascular system and muscles—building strength and blasting fat.

Chris Jordan—director of exercise physiology at Florida's Human Performance Institute, which trains high-level athletes and executives—developed the aforementioned HIIT program for people short on time. "A common mistake people make is quantity over quality," he says. His workout, which can be done as a single circuit or repeated up to four times, includes basic moves like jumping jacks, crunches and squats, and can be done in a small space, such as a hotel room. "It requires nothing more than a floor, a wall, a chair and your body weight."

This speedy approach is good for fat loss and getting in shape quickly, says Jordan, because of the after-burn effect that follows short bursts of intense activity. You can continue torching more calories than usual for up to 72 hours post-exercise. Just keep in mind that you should do programs like this only three times a week, on non-consecutive days, to give your muscles time to recover.

**Slow and steady wins the fat race**

If you're looking to gain muscle and get lean, Harley Pasternak—celebrity trainer to A-listers such as Rihanna and Megan Fox—says to take it easy on the cardio. (Cue the hallelujahs!) "I'm not a big fan of endurance events," he says. "They put a lot of stress on your body [in] training for them. Some people's bodies can handle it, but sometimes it's not a sustainable lifestyle...It's more of an extreme personal accomplishment. For some people it's great. For some people it's not."

Don't write off running yet, though—just give consideration to how much of it you do. "If we had a pill that did everything that exercise did, it would be, by far, the most powerful medication for improving health and longevity," says James O'Keefe, a cardiologist based in Kansas City, MO, and co-author of *Let Me Tell You a Story: Inspirational Stories for Health, Happiness, and a Sexy Waist*. "But like with any potent drug, getting the dose right is key.... The ideal [amount of exercise] is probably between

one and two-and-a-half hours per week, preferably split up in three or four sessions."

Nevertheless, marathons and half-marathons are becoming increasingly popular—perhaps with a cost. Research led by O'Keefe shows that the hearts of long-term marathon runners can get damaged from the extreme physical stress of excessive long-term endurance training. In some cases, they have up to 65 per cent more plaque in their arteries than non-runners, he says. What's more, a study published in the *Canadian Journal of Cardiology* this past October revealed that the untrained marathon runners in the study showed temporary heart damage, such as swelling and reduced blood flow. Checking "Run a Marathon" off your bucket list is OK when you're young and healthy, says O'Keefe, but it may become troublesome if you begin after middle age. Some cardiologists recommend shorter events, such as 5K and 10K runs, over marathons. (Talk to your doctor before you begin a training program.)

**10,000 steps in the right direction**

Physical activity doesn't always have to be sweaty to work. Both Pasternak and O'Keefe believe in building aerobic activity into your life outside of the gym. This means wearing a pedometer (at *Glow*, we like the Fitbit, fitbit.com) and aiming for a minimum of 10,000 steps daily. Not only does it burn calories, but it'll also help keep your blood sugar and cholesterol levels in check. A 2013 study published in *PLOS ONE* showed that longer, slower bouts of exercise—like a few hours of walking, or even standing—helped improve blood plasma lipid levels and insulin sensitivity in people with a sedentary lifestyle, whereas one hour of vigorous activity had no effect on these markers. And, says Pasternak, you'll be less ravenous in the kitchen if you walk or go for a light jog. "[Intense cardio] gives you this permissive effect," he says. "When dessert comes around, you say, 'I deserve it. I worked out really hard today.'"

**A bit of this, a bit of that**

Still trying to decide between HIIT, short runs or long walks? Give love to all of them. After years of an all-or-nothing approach, ranging from heavy weightlifting to doing nothing at all, Roheim McRae now alternates between HIIT and long walks or rollerblading. "I won't go to the gym three times a week," she says, exhausted from her workout, but smiling. "The length of [my activity] has nothing to do with effectiveness. I've learned to love my body for what it can do. Before that, I thought I had to fix something. I want to feel good because I need the energy and strength to live my life." ④

134 pounds. "I'm very short, so to look slim instead of stout is my ultimate goal."

**The expert:** Asana Afshar, fitness manager at Steve Nash Sports Club, Yaletown, Vancouver

"Her focus has been on weight loss rather than fat loss," says Afshar, noting that Scenna needs to redefine her goals. The first thing she should do is determine her body fat percentage, aiming to be at between 18 and 22 per cent, says Afshar. "It's normally a good range for a healthy female adult and my clients are happy with their look in this zone." Scenna seems to be spending enough time on her cardio training, but she needs to be specific with her heart rate goals. To get in the fat-burning zone, Afshar suggests she use a heart rate monitor to make sure she is between 125 and 140 beats per minute, for 45 to 60 minutes, while running. She also recommends seeing a personal trainer two times a week for resistance training.

**GLOW EXTRA:**

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**GET READY TO RUN**

If you've never run before, you can easily get in shape for a 10K, says John Stanton, founder and CEO of the Running Room, which offers 10-week running programs with clinics held once a week. "It's not going to take a minute, it's not even going to be in 10 days, but in 10 weeks we can take you from being a couch potato to becoming athletic."

Looking for a run? Check out the Shoppers Drug Mart Run for WOMEN ([runforwomen.ca](http://runforwomen.ca)), which takes place from April to June, and builds awareness and support for local women's mental health programs. The Running Room is also a sponsor of the run. Round up a crew of your favourite ladies to train together for the 5K and 10K walk/runs in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Oakville, Unionville, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City and Halifax. Get a beginner program at [glow.ca](http://glow.ca).

If walking is more your thing, here's a long walk you can feel good about. The Shoppers Drug Mart Weekend To End Women's Cancers is a two-day, 60K walk in Montreal (Aug. 23 to 24) and Toronto (Sept. 6 to 7). Register your team at [endcancer.ca](http://endcancer.ca).