

MIND

MEALS

Moving Beyond Cardio



JON BENSON :: TRANSFORMATIONAL LIFE COACH

A FREE SPECIAL REPORT FROM
M-POWER AND JON BENSON

MOTION

MUSCLE

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*The following is a free transcription of one audio (out of 48) from my M-Power Audio Series.
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Moving Beyond Cardio

Today we will begin with addressing the most common, and perhaps the least understood of these physical motion concepts: cardiovascular activity.

As is the case with many M-Power audios, be prepared to have some preconceived notions challenged. I titled this audio “Moving beyond Cardio” for more than just a play on words. I’m asking each of you to consider cardiovascular work in a completely differently light than you may be accustomed to viewing it in. I’ll also be dispelling some of the myths behind cardio work, and my 5 M-Powering Cardio Principles—that means greater results in less time.

Let’s go ahead and give cardio a working definition, just so we’re all on the same page:

Cardio is defined as a very boring process of peddling a motionless bike into the realm of oblivion while endeavoring to either read the newspaper or stare at the local gym scenery.

Oh, I’m KIDDING...well, sort of. However, I bet you can relate to that feeling!

The M-Power definition of cardio is defined as:

Any activity that elevates the heart rate above 60% and not exceeding 90%, performed for a duration exceeding 12 minutes, and with the intention being to burn fat or increasing VO2-Max output.

So, you do cardio to burn fat or become more heart-healthy...pretty simple.

The general list of cardio exercises usually include things such as running, brisk walking, Stairmaster, elliptical glider, treadmills, biking and so-forth.

Cardiovascular work does not need to be performed for excessive durations to reap all the benefits it can offer in relation to heart health. Also, cardio is not nearly as efficient at burning body fat as most people believe.

Yep...I'm already going well against the grain, but hey...it's charming!

You Must Do Cardio To Burn Fat...Right?

Let's start with a question...and you know how much I enjoy a good question.

Do you believe that cardiovascular work is essential in the quest to become lean?

Many of you probably answered yes. Well...it is simply not that cut and dry. For decades, some of the most famous bodybuilders and fitness athletes in the world performed no traditional cardio activity at all—none. There were guys and gals who were so lean they looked like an anatomy chart, far leaner than most of us would ever want to become, who never ran, jogged, stair-climbed or glided *anywhere*.

In fact, get this: one of my training mentors Vince Gironda was so *anti-cardio*, that he would literally remove you from his gym if he even *heard* the word “running” mentioned. No joke! At that time, running was just becoming popular, and to Vince this was simply unthinkable for someone wanting to burn off fat and build muscle at the same time. There are many today that would echo Vince's sentiments...more than you may believe.

I am not quite that dogmatic about cardio's lack of usefulness, but I'm certainly far from a “cardio bunny” when it comes to my own approach to a lifestyle of leanness. During my last peak, I performed very little cardio at all...and the vast majority was done with my heart rate never exceeding 125 beats per minute. I used nutrition and hard training to bring my body fat down to 6.5%...a percentage that most people would not even desire to achieve.

So, what gives here? Are all the pro-cardio trainers in the world off their Elipto-Rockers?

Not really...and I'll give them props here in a bit.

First, let's lay down some inarguable reasoning rather than just going on opinion:

Fact number 1: thousands of people have obtained and maintained very lean physiques without the use of any traditional cardiovascular exercises such as the ones mentioned previously.

Fact number 2: Without proper nutrition, cardiovascular work will simply *not* burn fat to any appreciable degree. Let's put it this way: one doughnut after a cardio session, and you just blew 45 minutes of INTENSE cardio work.

Is this starting to cause some light bulbs to go off?

Fact number 3: research done in Japan and at Virginia Tech clearly shows that fat burning *and* increased VO2-Max, the ability for the body to utilize greater amounts of oxygen and a clear marker for improved pulmonary performance (a healthier heart), was shown to occur in far less time than most people exercise.

Fact number 4: “Cardio” has been lumped into a grouping of exercises, all the while ignoring the cardiovascular benefits of numerous activities, *especially* weight training.

Okay...these are the facts. Now, let’s dissect them and discover some M-Powering Cardio secrets along the way—strategies that you can begin to implement *today* to maximize your cardio efforts and minimize the downsides of excessive cardio work. These downsides include loss of muscle mass, decreased energy, decreased immune response (ever wonder why so many people who do tons of cardio get sick at the drop of a hat?), and decreased recovery time.

It almost seems like cardio isn’t worth it. Well, there are many people who have come to that conclusion, and they may be correct. However, there’s a way to make it worth *to you*...and that is to make personalized the process in order to match your goals.

Let’s dive in.

What’s Wrong With Traditional Cardio?

First, my first fact above is simply that—a fact. There are too many examples to give, but suffice it to say that cardio was ‘not’ a part of the fat-burning strategies of some of the leanest people around. However, this does not make it useless. The question becomes how to blend cardio work with resistance training and nutrition to reap the best of all worlds.

The reason anti-cardio people dismiss it as a complete waste of time and energy is really pretty sound. Cardio work can indeed drain the body’s ability to recover from weight training, thus making the two somewhat incompatible without the strategies we’re about to discuss. Also, from a calorie in/calorie out point of view, it takes a ton of cardio to burn off even a pound of fat. Many find simply eating a bit less more enjoyable.

Still, the question remains—can we take advantage of the calories cardio will burn and combine it with eating in a specific way to come up with a win-win?

Yes, we can.

So, I’ll go on record with fact number one and say this: cardiovascular work is **not necessary in order to just burn fat**. Period. End of story. Also, high intensity cardiovascular work *may* (repeat, may) not be necessary for improving heart function, VO2-Max, or even general health.

You know those calorie counters you see on cardio devices? Most of the time they’re way off. Metabolic response simply cannot be measured by inputting your weight on a treadmill. For example, at 210 pounds and 10% body fat, I will burn far more body fat and probably far more calories during the same session that someone at 210 pounds and 30% body fat. Why? I carry far more muscle, and muscle burns calories—it is as simple as that. Also, my body is more in-tune with the processes of fat burning. My metabolic rate is substantially higher. I could go on, but I think you get my point—ignore the numbers on these gym devices.

The sad fact is that you are probably burning anywhere from 50-75% of the number of calories that little gizmo shows. Many people will actually plan their next meal around this number, and that just makes matters worse.

Now, what about that whole *cardio elevates metabolism for hours after a workout* bit you may have heard? Well, the good news is that it's true. The bad news is that it's not nearly as much of a boost as you may think.

The more intense you exercise, the greater the post-workout calorie burn. Intense exercise basically equals more calories burned *after the workout*. However, when it comes to *cardio*, the impact is not that great.

Here are some specifics for you to consider. Research reported in the *Physiology of Sport and Exercise* states that low-intensity cardio and/or exercise only burns about 30 calories after the session. Hardly a metabolic landslide! However, and we'll come back to this: *lower intensity exercise burns far more fat than sugar in order to fuel the energy required*.

In other words, you will burn more blood fat and body fat from walking a mile than running a mile, unless you are very well conditioned or genetically gifted. Running a mile will require only slightly more calories at that...hard to believe, isn't it?

Now, what happens when you jack the intensity sky-high, such as in what's known as HIIT, or *high intensity interval training*? Well, a lot more to be sure. Over a 24-hour period of time, the same research demonstrated that far more calories were burned **after** the workout than traditional cardio (60 minutes of moderate intensity): about 160 more calories, to be precise.

Just look at the math here—while burning 300 calories during a workout and another 200 or so calories after a workout is a wonderful thing, it's completely **moot** if you so much as eat a *bagel*.

There is far more than calories involved here. We're talking about *hormonal response*, which is far more important over the long haul to fat burning. That bagel just wrecked the session, and took your hormones along with it.

Here's the really good part, at least for those of you who are following the M-Power System: *weight training blows traditional cardio away when it comes to energy expenditure after the workout*.

Increases of 4-9% of total calories burned have been shown in multiple studies. This means potentially hundreds of additional calories utilized post-training, and that does not take into account many critical variables. First, weight training done correctly is stimulating the very tissue that burns the most fat, and that of course is muscle. Second, weight training increases all the vital fat burning hormones: testosterone, human growth hormone, and even thyroid output increases through weight training for most people. Also, the hormone **insulin**—the primarily culprit behind obesity to begin with—is managed more efficiently through weight training than from cardiovascular work. Weight training has the most significant effect on decreasing *insulin resistance*, one of the leading contributors to heart disease, obesity and type 2 diabetes.

How Do You Make Cardio Work For You?

So, what have we learned? Well, for starters, traditional cardio is almost a waste of time when it comes to changing the way your body looks. Could this explain why so many cardio freaks look *exactly* the same year after year, if not worse?

Granted, medical conditions such as blood pressure and lipid levels are improved, so this type of activity should not be totally written off. However, you will not get that great back side butt, tight arms and 6-pack by running 4 times a week unless you're very gifted in the gene department.

Do not feel too bad if this has been your approach, because most people fall for the “run for a half-hour and eat whatever I want” strategy of cardio and fat loss.

Now, I'm about to save you a lot of time, and jack your fat burning through the roof. I'm about to share my own approach to cardio—one that utilizes all the pros of cardio and minimized the cons.

We'll start with a discussion of my fact number 3...the element of time and intensity on fat burning and heart-healthy cardio.

Much of the data you hear about HIIT cardio stems from research done by a Japanese researcher named Dr. Tabata. Tabata was able to demonstrate repeatedly that drastic elevations in VO2-Max and pulmonary response rates were possible when periods of moderate activity were interspersed with periods of intense activity.

What does that mean in plain English? *You need to vary your intensity during your cardio sessions.* There are almost an infinite number of workable combinations, but one of the most popular is two minutes at 85% or greater intensity followed by 2 minutes of lower intensity (60-75%).

The Power Of The 5/2

I have designed a cardio program around this protocol called the “5/2”. This takes advantage of the fact that you will burn more fat from lower intensity training yet create more of a caloric “after-burn” from exercising at higher intensity.

Note: a rough calculation of your maximum heart rate is 220-your age. This is only a crude estimate, but enough to suffice for most people. If you are 40, this would be 220-40=180.

Monday, Tuesday & Friday Cardio Workout: 5/2 Interval Training

EXERCISE

Any cardio equipment (or run/walk) will suffice

Warm-up to 70% Max Heart Rate (MHR):	5 minutes
<u>Aerobic Cycle</u>	
Steady state train at 70-75% MHR	5 minutes
Work Phase: 85-90% MHR	2 minutes (work up to this, decreasing time if need-be)
Perform Aerobic Cycle 3 times	7-minute cycles x 3
<u>Cool Down</u>	5 minutes
TOTAL CARDIO WORKOUT TIME:	31 minutes

Another Real Time-Saver: GXP

What about heart health? What if you're one of the many people who simply do not enjoy cardio, wants to hit the weights and diet the fat off...all while making sure your ticker is ticking right along? Well, enter Dr. Richard Winett and his *GXP cardio*. "GXP" stands for *Graded Exercise Protocol*.

Dr. Winett was able to demonstrate in multiple university studies that just nine minutes of GXP cardio performed only 2-3 times per week was sufficient to elevate VO₂-Max 25% and increase pulmonary function as well as 5 days per week of running for 60 minutes! Wow...that's a time-saver...and a knee-saver.

GXP is performed by doing a 3-minute warm-up to about 85% of your maximum heart rate. Afterwards, all you need to do is maintain this in a steady state fashion—meaning that you do not allow your heart rate to vary much during your exercise interval, which is another 3 minutes. The best way to ensure that you're keeping the numbers straight is using a Polar heart rate monitor. I really enjoy mine...plus looking at the numbers gives me something to do.

After the exercise interval, cool down for 3 minutes...and presto: you are finished.

I tried this for a year and saw vast increases in my VO₂-max, but not much in the way of fat burning, as you may imagine. Still, that isn't the purpose of GXP. The idea is to save you hours of needless activity, unless you want to improve your endurance to a significant degree for sports or other reasons. You can also increase the duration to 15 minutes using intervals of 5/5/5, which will increase the fat burning component of GXP.

My Five M-Powering Principles For Moving Beyond Cardio

So, we have learned that you can get faster heart-healthy results using different cardio protocols, and that by varying the intensity of your intervals; even traditional cardio can be

altered to drastically improve fat burning. So what the heck do we do with all this great information? Put it together into a synergistic approach, and *move beyond cardio*.

Ready?

Here are my 5 M-Powering Cardio principles. This is a systematic way of using all the data we just covered in a method that will all but ensure:

- You burn the greatest amount of fat
- Muscle is left where it belongs (remember, cardio can waste muscle tissue)
- Time is saved in the gym.
- Your immune system is improved/saved from abuse
- And overall workout recovery is increased.

Timing of cardio work is really crucial. I have **strong** convictions on this fact. There is research to support it, as well as a great deal of common sense. The bottom line is...

Fasting cardio **rules**, as long as you abide by the rules of proper nutrition.

For those of you not familiar with the concept, cardio done on an empty stomach, assuming you do not have issues with low blood sugar, forces the body to tap into fat stores much more rapidly than working out on a full stomach. This is due to the fact that the body must burn through a lot of blood sugar prior to tapping into body fat for fuel when fully fed. When you first get up in the morning, blood sugar is very low, and hitting your cardio at this time takes advantage of that fact. You burn fat, and you do it much faster, performing cardio on an empty stomach, first thing in the morning.

There are some caveats to this. Check out the variables: low-carbohydrate dieters really rock the house on cardio, as your blood sugar levels are already low, generally speaking. So, for the most part, low-carbers burn more fat during cardio sessions...or more accurately stated, people with lower levels of blood sugar and lower triglycerides, a form of blood fat increased by carbohydrate consumption, will burn more body fat during cardio.

Also, the speed to which you burn through blood sugar no matter what type of nutrition plan you follow can be greatly impacted by caffeine, L-Carnitine and other ergogenic aids. We'll cover that aspect in a moment.

Finally, the more muscle you carry, the more fasting cardio works to your advantage. More muscle makes for a greater insulin response by the body. Since insulin adversely affects fat burning, keeping insulin levels low makes good sense. Muscle and weight training encourages, for lack of a better term, the proper use of insulin.

Your poor pancreas has been taxed since birth to process far more sugar than it was ever meant to. The end result is an excess of insulin wandering around the bloodstream. Lower insulin is almost always equated with a normal blood glucose level, unless you happen to be diabetic. You want your blood glucose nice and stable to burn fat efficiently. Muscle is a prime variable.

There are several variables to fasting cardio we need to cover. For starters, morning cardio can increase muscle *loss* if you are not careful. However, studies and real-world examples that show this to be true have been based on *intense* cardio sessions.

That brings us to Principle 2:

Perform fasting cardio for longer periods of time and at lower intensity levels. I prefer 65-75% max heart rate for 45-60 minutes. This is cardio you can do while watching TV, taking a brisk morning stroll, or just grabbing a pair of Heavy Hands and listen to music.

The benefits of this approach are numerous. First, as we discussed earlier, lower intensity cardio pulls more energy from fat than does intense cardio, which tends to be more of a sugar-burner. Therefore we need to increase the *time* involved, but only for our fasting cardio. Fasting cardio at this pace is a great way to start the day. Plus it's simple...there's not a lot of intense effort required to pull this off. You can perform this type of cardio 4-7 days per week depending on your schedule and goals.

Principle 3:

Optimize your morning sessions with a bit of metabolic trickery. First, there is plain old coffee. There are many studies now that confirm that a cup or two of coffee per day can *lower* heart disease risk. Plus the caffeine in coffee is one heck of a fat burning aid. Just don't overdo it, and be sure your doctor is okay with this recommendation.

Second, drink a large glass of *cold* water prior to your session. Strange combination—hot coffee and cold water—but there is rhyme behind my reasoning. Drinking cold water will force the body to heat up internally, a process known as *thermogenesis*. Higher levels of thermogenesis means greater fat burning. Plus you need to hydrate yourself thoroughly prior to cardio work, especially if you are drinking coffee, which is a diuretic.

Next, consider a few key supplements. L-Carnitine, an amino acid, taken in the morning without carbohydrates, can greatly assist the process of liberating stored body fat. It is not necessary by any means, but very helpful. Personally I take 3-4 grams prior to training. Next, and this *is* important, I recommend you take L-Glutamine in powdered form—about 5 grams or so. This will help keep your body from entering a catabolic state during your hour of extended fasting.

Okay, now we're really set up and ready for our morning cardio fat burning workout. Just take your pick of exercises—almost any will suffice for this degree of intensity. Just don't skimp on the time—hit it for 45 minutes or longer for maximum effect. Remember, you will **not** receive the benefits of post-exercise calorie burning...but you'll be burning almost nothing but fat during the exercise period. Leave post-workout calorie burning to the activity that burns the most to begin with—weight training. That's right: weight training is a heck of a fat-burner, contrary to what you may have been told.

Principle 4:

Intense cardio should be performed 2-4 days per week, and only at certain times for maximum benefit.

I'm going to share my ultimate secret to cardio and fat burning: do it after you work out with weights, but **only** after you consume a quick meal.

Let me tell you why. First, after a hard workout, your heart rate is elevated, and your body is prime to jump right into burning fat for fuel. In fact, depending on the workout, which we'll cover in a moment, you may already be in full-blown fat-burning mode.

Here's what you do: take a protein drink or a small meal to the gym with you. Put it in your gym bag. After your workout, immediately drink some cold water and consume **half** of this meal, then immediately hit your cardio session. I find the treadmill or glider the best exercise for this strategy, as we're going hard and fast.

For your cardio workout, I want you to perform a GXP-like session, but mixed with Tabata's interval training protocols. It looks something like this:

- 1-2 minutes of warm-up to get your heart rate up to about 80-85%;
- 3 minutes at 85%;
- 3 minutes at reduced speed, almost to a slow walk. Your heart rate should drop no lower than 70%;
- 2 minutes at 85%;
- 2 minutes at reduced speed, same protocol;
- 1 minute at 85-90%...really work it hard, but be careful;
- 3-5 minutes cool-down to near-normal heart rate.

That is called my **super burn** routine.

You can start with the 2 minutes if you want to make this a faster process. However, even the full super burn is only 17 minutes!

Why is this an effective fat burning tool? Well, we covered our fat burning primarily in our hour-long low intensity session, either earlier in that day or the previous day, depending on how often you want to workout. However, we did a lot more than cardio for 17 minutes—we just released a considerable amount of *fatty acids* from our workout—and then burned a lot of them off during this process. Also, since the body was already primed for fat burning, our 17 minutes was really the equivalent of about 37 minutes of 'normal' cardio!

After the super burn session, consume the second half of your meal.

The meals are split in half for a good reason. First, your body will not have time to digest the carbohydrates in the first meal prior to your cardio session, so it will not raise your blood sugar in time to prevent maximum fat loss. The meal after the workout is to prevent any muscle loss from occurring.

Principle 5:

Whenever possible, take a brisk walk either after your workout and meal, or prior to retiring at night. This will do nothing but accelerate the process of fat burning even further.

Conclusion

That is M-Powering Cardio in a nutshell. There are more specifics and even more tips to burning fat that I'll cover in later sessions of M-Power, but this alone will take you 10 times further than simply "doing some cardio" and hoping for results.

Our next M-Power Motion audio will cover intense morning sessions, as well as how to use your heart rate to gauge your progress toward your fitness and fat burning goals. On top of this, we'll address how a specific form of conditioning can be used to *help prevent heart disease*. This is **the** most overlooked factor in fitness evaluations—a mistake made by the vast majority of trainers and fitness assessment professionals that, once caught, can be a literal lifesaver.

The next few weeks of M-Power kicks off with an audio you do **not** want to miss. It's called *Synchronicity: Putting It Together*. This begins our discussion on what is known as *integral theory*, and how you can begin applying what you have learned about mind, meals, muscle and motion into one powerful tool for total success in fitness and in life.

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