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Weekend detours

New formula for women to burn calories Study disputes max heart rate accuracy

WOMEN who use a heart-rate monitor to measure exercise intensity and the calorie burnt during their workouts may want to consider doing a new calculation to determine their maximum heart rate.

The calorie burn of a given workout is determined using exercise intensity. How hard a person is working is shown by their heart rate as a percentage of their maximum heart rate.

Maximum heart rates vary greatly among individuals and are most commonly determined using the formula 220 minus your age.

However, a 2010 study from Chicago's Northwestern University has challenged the accuracy of this formula when applied to women.

The study suggested the new formula for women, 206 minus 88% of age, provided a more accurate estimate of the peak heart rate a healthy woman should attain during exercise.



At age 30, the original formula gives a maximum heart rate of 190 beats per minute for men and women.

The new women's formula gives a maximum heart rate of 179 beats per minute.

Maximum heart rates are required by heart rate monitors to calculate the energy burn of a given workout and they can also be used to determine heart rate training zones and upper heart rate limits for exercise.

A max heart rate set 11 bpm higher than it should be can result in a heart rate monitor underestimating the total calorie burn of a session.

Similarly, if the maximum heart rate is set too high, women will have trouble meeting the upper limits of

target training zones.

Intense aerobic activity plays a crucial part in the fight against flab, and a heart rate monitor can be a very useful weapon.

However, in order for heart rate monitors to be most accurate at determining the calorie burn, they need to be programmed with accurate information.

Just keep in mind that all predictive formulas are limited to estimating for individuals based on aggregate data and the only truly accurate means of determining individual max heart rates would be to perform a physically demanding maximum heart rate test.

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