

Mr Silly took the phrase 'pumping iron' a bit too literally



3

TRAINING WITH A HEART RATE MONITOR

If you've never trained with a heart rate monitor or you've done it now and again, but not part of a structured programme, then read on. This form of training can revolutionise how you use those endless hours in the gym, or pounding the streets, and bring you results you never thought possible. At CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA, we're convinced that training with a monitor is a highly beneficial way to train and here we tell you why.

WHAT IS A HEART RATE MONITOR AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

They come in all shapes and sizes and some are far more sophisticated than others, but they virtually all have one thing in common - they use a transmitter in a chest strap to measure your heart rate, which is displayed on a watch, in beats per minute. The more you pay, generally speaking, the more features you get and at the very top end they come complete with PC programmes that enable you to monitor your performance on screen.

WHY DO RUNNERS AND OTHER SPORTS PEOPLE USE HEART RATE MONITORS?

There are a number of reasons, including: a weight control management programme, measurement of recovery times, to increase performance, and to add structure to training programmes. These are achievable because monitors provide a huge variety of performance measurements that can help monitor progress. These measurements include calorie counting, weight loss calculations, actual heart rate, heart rate recovery times, target zone indicator and also alarms that notify you when you reach your upper and lower heart rate target limits.

HOW DOES IT ALL WORK AND HOW COULD IT HELP ME?

At the centre of working with a monitor is your maximum heart rate, as it's from this that all subsequent training calculations are based. You can work this out by deducting your age from the figure 220 if you are male and 210 if you're female. So, if you're a 30 year old female, your maximum heart rate is 180 beats per minute and if you're a 50 year old male, it's 170 beats per minute.

You then use your maximum heart rate figure to structure your training programme. If, for example, you're looking at a general fitness plan you should work at between 60-75% of your maximum heart rate (MHR), with 60% being at the bottom of your target zone and 75% at the top.

If you want a more serious programme, you should talk to a qualified trainer, coach or doctor about what is the right target zone for you. Once above 75%, you'll be in to anaerobic training, which puts your body under more pressure.



Although you should always listen to your body when you're training, one of the benefits of monitors is that they will tell you exactly how you are progressing, by advising you of your heart rate, whether you're making progress and what your recovery times are like. Over time, you will notice that your heart rate doesn't go as high when you run up a particular hill, or over the course of a certain circuit that you run, and this will in turn help you increase the type and duration of the workout that you can do. In effect, the monitor can help you decide when to increase your mileage or the severity of gradients that you include in your runs.

The secret is to start slowly and aim to train at the bottom of your target zone initially, with a gradual build up to the upper end of the zone after a few months. Once you reach that level, you can talk to a specialist about moving to another level.

Using a monitor can add another edge to your training and give you another goal. It's not just about running the same route day after day or how fast you do it, it can now be about what heart measurements your monitor records.

USING A HEART RATE MONITOR AS PART OF KEEPING A TRAINING LOG

With the development of PC based training logs and the increased use of heart rate monitors that can store huge amounts of data, it's now easier than ever to keep a log. Gone are the days when the only accurate method was a notebook and pen, although for many it's still the only foolproof method. If you do keep a log, you may want to consider both, as some of the PC models can give you projections of performance, not just act as a record of what's gone before. A training log can help you keep a really accurate record of your training and give you something to look back on after the race!

