Abstract
Riding a bike is a healthy activity. Regular exercise in the form of cycling will make you fitter, stronger, will help you reduce fat levels and look in better shape, boost your energy and generally improve your mood.
For many people, the bicycle is the first step to independence and exploration. Good planning and preparation are essential to ensure that cycling is a positive experience for everybody.

Keywords: cycling, fitness, training, health, training plan.

JEL classification: I10, I19

1. Introduction

For most people, the simple practicalities of getting around town, commuting or embarking on a short off-road leisure ride with family are all that interests them. Even when cycling aims are that simple, just working on a few key skills and boosting confidence will enable you to get the most out of your cycling experience.

Improving fitness will also make cycling easier and more effective.
Most everyday cycling is an aerobic activity, when muscle generate energy for movement using oxygen. Sprinting or riding up hills is anaerobic exercise, when the muscle burn energy supplies without using oxygen, because is not enough available.

Aerobic activity is sustainable for long periods; anaerobic exercises are only possible for short bursts of time.

Unless you are training to race your bike it is best not to get too hung up on whether you are exercising aerobically or anaerobically; just getting out and riding will be enough to boost your fitness levels far above those of the average members of the population. You may want to push yourself sometimes, but be careful not to overreach yourself.
2. Effects of cycling

Cycling mainly works the legs, but the arms, back and core muscles also get a significant workout during a ride. More importantly, the cardiovascular system works hard and becomes more efficient. After just a few weeks of regular cycling, you will be less out of breath when you climb stairs and able to sustain longer periods of activity (Pickering, E., 2009).

Depending on how hard you go, an hour-long bike ride can burn between 300-800 calories, depending of your intensity workout. If you ride at a moderate intensity, your body will gradually burn its fat stores and if you are overweight, you will lose weight by cycling, and the most important thing will be not to necessarily lose weight, but to reduce your body fat to a healthy level.

Cycling is great exercise, but it will have a far more positive effect on your body and health if you eat and drink properly as well.

A balanced diet, with natural foods and sensible levels of hydration will fuel your body much more effectively than dinners outside the house and junk food (Manescu D.C., 2010).

By putting better fuel in to your body, you will have enough energy to continue cycling and also reap the health benefits.

Hydration is very important for the general health and cycling can dehydrate you quite badly on a hot day, so drink plenty of water. There is no correct amount of water to drink in a day, it varies enormously depending on the temperature, time and type of activities practiced, but in hot weather, when you have been out for a long ride, the body needs at least 2-21/2 litres of water.

In conclusion, cycling can offer some major benefits like:
- builds and increases strength and muscle tone;
- builds stamina;
- improves cardio-vascular fitness;
- eats up calories;
- improves heart health;
- improves coordination;
- reduces stress.

Fitness cycling can really be integrated in any fitness program; with every turn of the wheel calories are burnt, strength is build and wellness is achieved.
3. Getting fit

As we have discovered, cycling has beneficial effects on your fitness levels, regular cycling makes you fit and healthy, and for many this is enough. But why stop here? If you design a long term training plan and work on improving steadily in the long term, your fitness will continue to improve with all the benefits that involves. It is a good idea to build a strong foundation of fitness, then progress further by adding time on the bike, or going a little harder (Wadsworth, A., 2012).

The most important principle involved in gaining fitness is overload (Manescu D.C., 2008). By stressing your body muscles, the cells within the muscles break down to a microscopic level, which explains the tiredness and fatigue we all feel after exercise, but your body will rebuild those cells stronger than before and the final result will offer you a fitter body and level.

As time progresses and you continue to ride, you will be capable of going just a little bit harder or faster than you could before. The muscle cells will break down again, and be rebuilt stronger than ever.

In only two month it is possible to make big changes in the level of your fitness, but at this stage the most important impact on your life will be to create the long term habit of regular cycling.

If you look on a training plan as a closed period of time that is only done once, you run the risk that when it is over, you will sit back, relax and let your hard work go to waste.

4. Basic two month training plan

The training plan below will suit anyone taking up cycling for the first time, but for unfit or overweight individuals it is best to consult a doctor before taking up physical exercise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Weeks one to four</th>
<th>Weeks five to eight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Gentle walking</td>
<td>Gentle walking with stretches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>30 minutes ride, slow and steady</td>
<td>1 hour ride at a moderate pace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Gentle stretches</td>
<td>Gentle walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>45 minutes ride, slow and steady</td>
<td>1 hour ride at a moderate hills; try harder up the hills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Gentle walking with stretches</td>
<td>Gentle walking with stretches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>1 hour ride, slow and steady</td>
<td>1 hour an a half ride, slow and steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>1 hour ride, slow and steady</td>
<td>1 hour ride, slow and steady</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
It is very important to stick to the programme. Follow the training plan, be flexible and keep a record of each successful ride to spur you on. After one month, assess your progression, move on to month two and then plan your month three. This way you will have the motivation of knowing that you are fitter than you were when you started and you have a long term plan beyond the initial two month period.

The most important thing is to establish cycling as a regular part of your life and the fitness benefits will come hand in hand with that.

By gradually making your training harder, your body will adapt to become fitter, stronger and more flexible.

5. Conclusions

Cycling burns fat, but also builds muscle, so your lean body mass may increase after a few months of cycling; this is perfectly healthy.

Incorporating the bicycle into an organized exercise routine is very easy: you can ride to and from work every day with no other organization, or you can set aside two evenings a week and go for a ride, plus an extra ride at the weekend.

The only limiting factor is your schedule, so work with it, not against it!

When you start to ride your bike, you have deliberately chosen a fitter and healthier lifestyle; you have chosen to be practical and self-sufficient and much more, you have chosen to have fun.

Cycling is the ideal activity to combine fitness with fun and adventure and a great way to spend time outdoors.

REFERENCES

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