

“F.I.T. Principle of Conditioning”

By: Mind to Muscle Sports Conditioning Centre

Sports conditioning is based upon the F.I.T. Principle, whose three components, when manipulated in various ways, determine the specific adaptation an athlete’s body will undergo. F.I.T. is an acronym for Frequency, Intensity and Type of exercise choice and applies to all methods of sport conditioning. In athletics, many times the difference between winning and losing is determined by how well the training, both in-season and off-season, suit the athlete’s level of conditioning and the intended sport.

Hockey, from a sports conditioning perspective, is a power dominated sport that relies predominately on the anaerobic energy system. Development of proper hip and leg power, core stability and balanced flexibility are the key areas of conditioning that will improve performance on the ice. Let’s discuss the importance of these concepts in hockey development to the F.I.T. principle.

Frequency refers to the number of times a specific exercise or exercise session is performed. The frequency will vary depending on the goal of the exercise. Whether it is deciding on the number of repetitions of a sprinting exercise when training anaerobic fitness, or deciding on how many power training sessions to perform per week, the number of repetitions and sets will determine how specific the training is for hockey development. Most importantly, planning the appropriate rest time between specific workouts will maximize the body’s adaptation to that type of training. If an insufficient amount of rest time is allowed for that body part between workouts, the athlete may be in a state of overtraining. Conversely, not performing specific exercises often enough, such as flexibility training, may limit the development of specific portions of an athlete’s physical profile.

Intensity of the exercise goes a long way to determine the success of the off-ice training. Many players are more than willing to try hard on the ice, but unless that intensity and motivation is also applied to their off-ice conditioning program, the results will not reflect the player’s intentions. Power and anaerobic training require extremely intense efforts to make gains in these aspects of a player’s conditioning level. All training requires the athlete to pay attention to the lifting technique, body positioning and cadence of each exercise, and the players who maintain an intense, focused approach to each workout will maximize the effectiveness of the program.

The last component of the F.I.T. principle is the type of exercises chosen. Training for hockey requires many different types of exercises and it is important to select those that will benefit the athlete's development. Exercises must strengthen the hips, legs and abdominal muscles using specific techniques. Choose exercises that will benefit on-ice performance, not the appearance of someone's physique in front of a mirror. Progress the strengthening exercises to those with more of a power emphasis, such as a single leg squat progressing to continuous jumps over a pylon on one leg. It is important to note that even for younger athletes there must be progression within the choice of exercises to promote positive changes in their conditioning level. However, it is even more important to select the type of exercises that match an athlete's level of development.