

# Get that HEART Pumping

Cardio is one of the most important things you can do for your body, whether you want to lose weight, build muscle or improve your health. The great thing is, there are plenty of choices for cardio exercise. Anything that gets your heart rate into your target heart rate zone will work. The confusing thing is, there are so many choices out there...which exercises are the most effective? There's no 'right' cardio exercise and the best choice is the one you enjoy and the one you'll work hardest at, but there are some that work best if your goal is to blast calories and get in great shape.

## 1. Running

Running is a great choice for a variety of reasons:

- It doesn't require special equipment (except some quality shoes)
- You can do it just about anytime, anywhere
- It's high impact, which helps build strong bones and connective tissue
- It gets your heart rate up more quickly than low or no impact exercise
- It helps you burn serious calories, especially if you add hills, sprints or try interval training.

## 2. Cross-Country Skiing

If you're looking to burn maximum calories, cross-country skiing is an excellent choice. Whether you're on a gym machine or swooshing over miles of snow, cross-country skiing is an incredible cardio exercise. Because it involves both the upper and lower body, it doesn't take much work to get your heart rate up, which is where the calorie-burn comes in. There are a few downsides, however. If you're going for the full outdoor experience, you'll need lots of gear, plenty of practice and, of course, snow. You can mimic the movement at the gym by using a crosstrainer (such as an elliptical with arms or an Arc Trainer.)

## 3. Bicycling

Whether you're outdoors or indoors, cycling is an excellent cardio workout. By using the power of your legs, you increase endurance while burning lots of calories, anywhere from 250-500 in 30 minutes, depending on how fast you go and how high your resistance is. What makes cycling even better than other activities is that you can incorporate it into your daily life. You can ride to and from work or use your bike to run errands around town. It's also low impact, which is great for your joints and perfect cross-training for high impact activities like running or aerobics.

## 4. Elliptical Trainer

Next to the treadmill, the elliptical trainer is the most popular cardio machine at the gym and it's no wonder. The elliptical trainer allows your body to move in a natural way, but without the impact of the treadmill. You can add intensity by increasing resistance and some machines include adjustable ramps and arm handles for added intensity as well. As a bonus, you can go backwards on an elliptical trainer, adding variety while working your muscles in a different way. The elliptical trainer is also a good choice for runners looking for a break from pounding the pavement.

## 5. Swimming

Swimming is another great choice because, like cross-country skiing, it's a full body exercise. The more body parts you involve in your workout, the more calories you'll burn. Spend 30 minutes doing the breast stroke and you'll burn almost 400 calories. Best of all, your joints are fully supported so you don't have to worry about high-impact injuries. It's also great cross-training for other cardio activities.

## **6. Step Aerobics**

Step aerobics is another great choice, particularly for people who like choreographed workouts, but don't enjoy the jackhammer feel of high impact aerobics. The step offers intensity without the pounding and it's easy to up the energy by adding risers. It's also a great calorie-burner, targeting your legs, butt and hips while burning 300-400 calories in 30 minutes (during high intensity sessions). Though it might look complicated, step is easy to learn if you start with a beginner class or video.

## **7. Rowing**

This is an often overlooked machine in the gym because we're confused about how it works and, perhaps, aren't sure it delivers a great workout. However, rowing is a physically demanding exercise involving both the upper and lower body, which means a higher heart rate and a greater calorie burn. Like an elliptical trainer or stationary bike, there are different levels of resistance, allowing you to get a challenging workout no matter what your fitness level. But if you've never tried rowing, it can be tough. Start with 10-15 minutes and add time to subsequent workouts to give your body time to adapt.

## **8. Kickboxing**

Kickboxing is another great choice for exercisers who want to work hard with more choreographed workouts. Combining kicks and punches not only enhances your coordination, it involves both the upper and lower body, making this an excellent overall workout. There are a variety of videos available or you can opt for a class at your local gym to get a more social interaction. Once you're familiar with different kicks and punches, you can even create your own workouts or, better yet, use a punching bag (compare prices) to get an even better workout.

## **9. Walking**

Walking is another great choice for cardio because, like running, it's accessible: You don't need special equipment and you can do it anywhere, anytime. It's harder to get your heart rate up with walking since it is low impact. Adding hills, speed walking or using walking poles can also increase the intensity. Make sure you walk briskly--pretend you're trying to catch a bus--and keep your head up, back straight and swing your arms.

## **10. Jumping Rope**

Jumping rope is another calorie-scorcher and, as an added bonus, a jump rope packs easily in your suitcase, making it an excellent travel exercise. Start by jumping for 1-2 minutes at a time, taking breaks by marching in place and swinging your rope in a figure eight motion. Continue alternating for 10-20 minutes and, over time, gradually increase the amount of time you jump while decreasing your rests. You can add variety by trying different foot patterns (jumping on one foot, scissor jumps, etc.).

# 5 Cardio Machine Workouts

## Elliptical Machine

- **Booty Workout** -- Target glutes and hamstrings by playing with the incline on the elliptical. This elliptical booty workout will help you tone your backside while also getting a good cardio workout. Really give your backside a good workout by focusing on keeping your heels down while you're on the machine.
- **Core Workout** -- To work your core while on the elliptical, just let go. Not using the handles in this elliptical core workout helps engage all the muscles of your core as you work harder to stay balanced on the machine. The faster you can go, the more you'll work your core in this.
- **Just Like the Treadmill** -- For times when you can't find an empty treadmill in the gym, try this elliptical treadmill workout. The workout comes close to mimicking what running on a treadmill feels like and may even help even out your stride. To really feel like you're on a treadmill, don't hold onto the elliptical handles; instead, keep your arms in a running position.
- **Short on Time** -- When you don't have a lot of time, try this short interval elliptical workout. It's only 22 minutes long (including warm-up and cool down), and features really short and effective intervals. Using quick intervals makes the workout intense and is great for burning calories.
- **Beginner** -- If you're new to the elliptical machine -- or working out in general -- try this beginning elliptical workout. It uses all the different features of the machine, which gives you an idea of what it can do: by pedaling forward you work your quads, and going backward targets the hamstrings and booty. Focus on pushing the handles to work on your chest, and pulling the handles will work your upper back. A great way to challenge your core stability is to let go of the handles while keeping your pace steady.
- **Shorter Intervals** -- One way to push the interval envelope is to decrease the amount of rest time between your bouts of sprinting. By shortening your recovery time, you're pushing your anaerobic threshold and strengthening your cardiovascular system. Sound good? Then try this elliptical intervals shrinking recovery workout.
- **Total Body** -- This 30-minute elliptical workout targets your entire body while also getting your heart rate up.
- **Intervals** -- Do this elliptical interval workout when you only have 30 minutes to spare. It's the best way to get the most out of what you're doing!

## Upright Bicycle

Before you start the entire workout, you should already be familiar with the intensity level of your exercise bike. For example, level 0 gives you almost no resistance and intensity. Levels 3 to 4 gives you a moderate intensity level, and these levels are usually used for warm ups. Level 5 is already a bit harder, and you will already start to feel challenged during your exercise routine.

Level 6 is hard, level 7 is very hard, and level 8 is very, very difficult. Do not use levels 9 and 10 because these levels are too hard when you are starting out and will result in sheer exhaustion.

It is very important to be familiar with the intensity level of your exercise bike to be able to follow through the instructions, and to know which workout level you need to do.

For those who are beginners, or whose bodies are not very well conditioned, you can use the levels 3 to 5. For those who have average fitness levels, you can use levels 4 to 6, while advanced exercise bike users can use levels 5 to 8. It is best to vary your intensity levels, and to increase your intensity levels to increase the number of calories burned in a particular session. Doing the same exercise routine at the same intensity level will not only get you bored, but it will also stop your body from fully burning off those calorie and fat cells.

At the beginning of your exercise bike routine, start off at a speed that feels very comfortable to you. You can slowly begin at the speed, and you will gradually feel your heart rate rising. This is a very good warm up because it loosens your muscles and elevates your heart rate gradually to prepare you for more intense exercises. It is also very important to take note of your body positioning. This is to prevent any types of muscle pains or back and knee injuries. You should feel relaxed and comfortable.

Take note of your foot position and your back and arm position. You should press down through the whole foot, pulling back and up through the heel. Your knees should also be hip distance apart. You should press more through the insides of your foot so that your knees will stay in the line. You should also focus on your upper body. Try to relax your shoulders back down and try to connect to that upper core area. Pull your shoulder blades up and down and keep your upper back in a flexible and functioning position.

When you begin your exercise routine, you can first think of a flat road that gradually comes into a slight incline. This is to feel the intensity level of the routine going up. Then slowly imagine that you are biking on a really gentle hill, feeling the core of your muscles contracting as the slope gets steeper. It is also best to get into the beat of your music as you slowly adjust your incline, going to the top of the hill. You should feel your core muscles as you do your exercise routine, and feel that slight shift in your body weight. But always think about your core as you push through.

Finish a few seconds at the top of the hill, probably about 100 seconds, and come off the incline. Relax your shoulders and shake your arms out. Next, do a non-seated climb. Lift your seat up and lift your body. Relax your shoulders, then slowly stand up tall, and spin through your bike with a sort of running position. Push down through the ball of your foot, and work at a pace that you feel most comfortable at. You should feel the insides of your thighs working and the front a little bit more, and this is very important for leg balance. Drag your feet back, with your heels up and keep it going. Focus on your technique because this is an excellent workout for your thighs, legs and hamstrings.

## **Arc Trainer**

### Manual Workout

Create your own workout with the "manual" option on the Arc trainer. It's up to you to set the speed or resistance level because the "manual" option does not have a preset routine. Change the speed or resistance level at anytime, or switch to another program during the "manual" option. Beginners may prefer this option because you have more control over your workout, and the total calories, distance and heart rate will still be calculated.

### Hill Interval

The "hill interval" option simulates going uphill to create resistance against your legs. Your body weight is propelled against gravity by going uphill, creating resistance. Going uphill will increase leg strength and improve cardiovascular fitness. Only one to two hill workouts per week are necessary.

### Interval

Choose the "interval" training option to alternate between low and high resistance during your workout. The Arc trainer "interval" option alternates a low resistance for one minute and a high resistance for 30 seconds for the duration of your routine--resistance increases if you raise the level.

### Weight Loss

The "weight loss" option monitors your heart rate through the duration of the exercise to keep your intensity level within a certain percentage. "Fitness: Theory and Practice" by the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America suggests

your heart rate remain between 55 and 90 percent of your maximum heart rate for weight loss. Your maximum heart rate can be estimated by subtracting your age from 220.

## Cardio

Choose the "cardio" option for longer intervals. This option alternates between a low resistance for three minutes and high resistance for three minutes. "Fitness: Theory and Practice" describes cardio respiratory fitness as the ability of the body to take in, transport and utilize oxygen. Using the "cardio" option on the Arc trainer will strengthen the respiratory system and improve your overall fitness level.

## Strength

The "strength" option builds strength in your lower body by alternating between really light intensity and a really high intensity. Level one alternates between and intensity of 20 and 60. Stay on your toes to give the quadriceps and calves a workout. Sit back on your heels to work the hamstring and gluteus muscles.

## Rowing Machine

### Basic Row workout -- Warm Up

- Begin with some easy rowing for 10 minutes.
- Then do 1 minute at medium power rate 26 – 28.
- Take a short break and do 15 strokes at high power rate 28 – 30
- Row light for 20 strokes and then do another 15 stroke push at high power rate 30 – 32
- Again row light for 20 strokes before doing a 10 stroke push high power rate 32 – 34.
- Take a short break before rowing continuously for 5 – 7 minutes.
- Next get ready for the blaster *rowing workout* proper.

Challenge workout -- Before you begin this particular rowing workout you need to remember a couple of things.

First: Row efficiently.

Second: Focus on a good rowing workout rhythm

Third: Have a plan. Follow a good rowing workout strategy.

Fourthly: Set yourself up. That includes setting a correct drag factor setting and also adjusting your footplate to the correct position.

This rowing workout focuses on a pyramid system. Here it is:

- 2 x 250m with 3 minute rest.
- 2 x 500m with 5 minute rest
- 1 x 750m with 7 minute rest
- 2 x 500m with 5 minute rest
- 2 x 250m.

So as you can see. Begin with a 250m and when you finish take a 3 minute rest. Repeat the 250m before moving on to the 2 x 500m. The long 750m in the middle of the rowing workout is the peak of the session. See below for an explanation on the rowing intensities.

This rowing workout is a stinger and is best left for a time when you feel like you need a sharpening session. Also make sure that you are in good physical and mental shape before attempting this workout.

## The Blaster Rowing Workout Intensity Guidelines

*The first 250m* rowing workout blasters should be done at close to maximum power and speed. This is an important step for the rest of the erg or rowing workout. Don't try to save yourself because in a rowing workout like this one – every stroke counts.

*The 500m sections* should be done at a lesser intensity than the 250s. You could for example try to practice the 1st 500 of your race. In fact a rowing workout like this one is great for trying out different things.

*The 750m should not* be done at maximum. Remember over longer distances you need to be smart. A good example of approaching this section of the rowing workout is to use it to practice the middle 750 of your race pace. Alternatively, if you are feeling tired you could aim to do race pace – 2 seconds per 500m on your split power.

## Recumbent Bicycle

Many people are finding that recumbent exercise bike workout routines are a crucial part of their daily exercise. This low impact workout is easy to do for people of all shapes and sizes. The recumbent exercise bike is great not only for those that have back problems but also those that simply cannot take the rigorous running that treadmills require. Developing your own **recumbent bike workout routine** will help you not just to lose weight, but to get more physically fit. What's awesome about recumbent bikes is that you will sit through the duration of your exercise routine. You will feel comfortable enough because the bikes have relaxing bucket seats. **No more sore butt from a bike workout!** You can start the routine by simply stepping on each pedal. The recumbent bike will be easy and safe to use even for beginners. As days go by, you can develop your own steps or your own tricks on how you can make the workout more exciting. This way, you won't get tired of getting to it everyday and practicing your planned recumbent exercise bike routine.

### A Starter Recumbent Exercise Bike Workout Routine

- Start out with 10 minutes a day and work your way up until you are comfortable going 30 to 45 minutes 3 to 4 times a week or more.
- Be sure to stay hydrated before, during, and after your recumbent bike workout
- Change up the routine by focusing some days on a lower strength setting for a cardio workout and going for time to create better stamina and other days with higher strength intensity, lower time to push the muscles with a modified resistance training session on the bike

## Wellness Warriors

### *Get Your Heart Pumping*

Cardiopulmonary health is an important component of fitness. The heart is the body's main pumping mechanism for delivering blood to the various systems. Precious nutrients are transported through the fluid matrix in the circulatory system. Efficient gas exchange (O<sub>2</sub> & CO<sub>2</sub>) occurs from the lungs to the limbs using the blood as the vehicle. The heart is a muscle that can improve its function with training.

**Target heart rate:** Typically we want to work at 60% to 80% our Maximum Heart rate when we train for cardiopulmonary health.  $(220 - \text{age} = \text{HR Max})$  Multiply by desired % intensity (.60-.80) using this method will help you to determine what range one would like to see their heart working

Major benefits of Cardio vascular training

- Increased VO<sub>2</sub> max-improved ability for the body to take up and deliver oxygen to affected areas in a given activity
- Increased ejection fraction-the heart will squeeze more blood through/from the chambers of the heart with each beat
- Decreased resting heart rate-as the heart improves function with activity it will require fewer beats per minute while at rest
- Stabilize resting blood pressure-both hypertensive and individuals with low blood pressure can benefit from regular cardiovascular exercise

Types of Training

- Continuous style-comfortable, steady, low to moderate intensity for a sustained period of time
- Interval style-uncomfortable, high intensity for short bursts with rest between bouts of activity

**Today's Machines:**

*Elliptical trainer*-no impact, variable full body resistance

*Arc Trainer*-no impact, variable for lower/upper body separate

*Rowing machine*-no impact upper body

*Stationary bicycle*-no impact lower body, set the seat high enough that the leg is almost straight while pedaling\*\* (60-70 rpm ideal rate of pedal)

*Recumbent bicycle*-no impact lower body, unique design means this version will be easier on the lower back (60-70 rpm ideal rate of pedal)

Other ways to train the heart:

Walking, running, swimming, cycling, skipping rope, dancing and cross country skiing are several great ways to make your heart stronger.