

[IMAGE]

Heart-Healthy Exercise Habits

By Editorial Staff

People always talk about how they're going to the gym to do some "cardio." What's that really mean? Whether they're running on a treadmill, riding the recumbent bicycle or using an elliptical machine, they're talking about doing *aerobic* exercise - otherwise known as *cardio* because of its profound cardiovascular benefits.

Plain and simple, when you're doing aerobic exercise, you're using oxygen to replenish energy stores, which means the heart and lungs are working harder and getting stronger in the process. By comparison, *anaerobic* exercise (for example, weight training), requires your body to create energy without using oxygen. As you might imagine, aerobic exercise gets the entire body involved all at once, especially the respiratory system, while in general, anaerobic exercise works isolated muscle groups. Both types of exercise are good for you, but aerobic exercise is ideal for the heart because it improves cardiovascular and cardiorespiratory function. Here are some other significant benefits of aerobic exercise, courtesy of the Mayo Clinic and the University of Georgia Department of Kinesiology and Health:

- image - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Increases blood supply to muscles and ability to utilize oxygen.
- Increases amount of blood pumped (per beat and per minute).
- Increases HDL ("good") cholesterol and lowers triglycerides.
- Increases blood supply to muscles.
- Reduces resting heart rate.
- Reduces resting systolic/diastolic blood pressure.
- Reduces high cholesterol and risk of developing high cholesterol.

To achieve the maximum cardiovascular benefit during aerobic activities, you should exercise for at least 20-30 minutes at a time and build to your "target heart rate" - this is a range of beats per minute that represents approximately 60-85 percent of your maximum heart rate. The more time spent exercising within this safe range, the more you stand to gain, cardiovascularly speaking. The Mayo Clinic has a free online calculator you can use to determine your target heart rate

(www.mayoclinic.com/health/target-heart-rate/SM00083).

So, now that you know how aerobic exercise can help your heart, what are you waiting for? And remember, you don't need to go to a gym to do aerobic exercise; jogging, hiking, rowing, swimming and other outdoor pursuits work just as well as long as they're sustained and keep your heart pumping. Of course, always talk to your doctor before beginning any exercise program, particularly if you have any pre-existing heart condition.

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