



What is Cardiovascular Training?

Cardiovascular exercise is also known as aerobic exercise and includes endurance activities, such as walking, swimming, running, biking, dancing or any form of sustained movement. Cardiovascular exercise strengthens your heart by making it work harder than it would at rest. This extra work also expends energy making cardiovascular exercise an effective way to burn calories.

What Can Cardiovascular Training Do For Me?

- **Strengthen Your Heart and Improve Your Energy Level**

Ironically, when we expend energy during cardiovascular exercise, we actually gain energy in the long run. A stronger heart means a more efficient heart. When you work “aerobically” – with oxygen – your heart becomes a more efficient pump so that with each heartbeat, more oxygen is sent to your organs. More oxygen means more energy

- **Aid Weight Loss**

Cardiovascular exercise burns calories. The old adage that weight loss requires that you take in fewer calories than you expend holds true. Eat a little less and move a little more – that’s the key to healthy weight loss.

- **Improve Your Mood and Cognitive Abilities**

There has long been a suspected link between depression and exercise, but only recently have studies backed this up with research. The National Institute of Health has suggested exercise as an initial source of treatment for mild depression. Cardiovascular exercise also releases “feel good” chemicals into your system called endorphins. People who regularly participate in physical activities such as walking, biking and dancing have been shown to be less susceptible to loss of cognitive function, as well.

- **Prevent Disease**

Osteoporosis, arthritis, depression, diabetes and obesity, as well as related conditions such as heart disease, stroke and high blood pressure, all respond positively, and relatively quickly, to a regular exercise program that includes cardiovascular training.

What Types of Cardiovascular Exercises Should I Do?

Almost any activity you do during the day can be considered cardiovascular exercise if it moderately increases your heart rate (the number of heart beats per minute). When exercising at a moderate level, you should be able to carry on a conversation or sing a song. To improve health, the USDA recommends 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise most days of the week. If your goal is weight loss, you may need to exercise longer. If this is your goal, check with your doctor for specific instructions.

Walking

Walking is one of the easiest forms of cardiovascular activity as it requires no equipment and no learning curve. Outdoor walking, mall walking and even walking in place in your home are preferable to not walking at all.

Swimming

Check your local Y, community center or healthy club to find the nearest pool. Swimming works the entire body while being easy on the joints. Pool walking is a great workout if you don't know how to swim.

Aerobic Video Tapes or DVDs

There are many video tapes or DVDs designed especially for older adults. Look for low-impact aerobics and walking videos. Always wear sturdy shoes with good soles and exercise in an open space on a hard surface that is not too slippery.

Stationary Equipment

Stationary bicycles, treadmills and elliptical trainers can be safely used at home, though they can be expensive. Look for a machine with the fewest number of bells and whistles, a quiet motor and safety features such as handrails and emergency stop chords.

Classes

Check your local Y, community education centers or health clubs for cardiovascular exercise classes designed especially for seniors.