



# Cardiovascular Workout

By Wendy Marks  
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Let me start by saying that I often tell folks there are two types of people in the world, those that love to go to the gym, and those that love to leave. I am the latter, but would like to keep my body in as good shape as I can as I get older. Hence cardio exercise. It is a necessary component in any health.

Cardiovascular exercise is any movement that gets your heart rate up and increases your blood circulation. It can be anything from swimming, to power walking or using an elliptical machine. It can even be vigorous dancing! Dancing is a personal favorite exercise of mine, accompanied by loud music and often in private! Cardiovascular exercise is different in intensity from peaceful stretching like yoga or tai chi. These are of course excellent exercise and great for your body and spirit, but do not work the heart nearly as much. There are so many ways to do cardio exercise all which will have benefits, and any of which will support the main reason for doing it, keep your heart healthy!

A lot of folks think of cardio exercise as a way to burn off excess calories. It's true you will burn calories, but after a vigorous 1/2 hour session in the gym I'm always a little crestfallen to see I have burned 150 calories. That is not even a small muffin. So it's not really a straightforward "work out and get thin" equation. Some forms are slightly better when strictly speaking of fat loss but all cardio, regardless of form will burn off calories, just not enormous amounts. The way it really helps to lose weight is more in the building of muscle mass and strength, which does consistently aide your body to burn more calories. The reason to do cardio is not primarily fat loss but there are a wide variety of health benefits you receive from a regular cardio program.

The body takes care of us very well but we need to do certain maintenance things to reciprocate. Your heart is a muscle just like any other and in order for it to become strong it must get exercise. If you fail to work it, it will weaken over time and then if stressed by life and events it is less able to stand up to large demands. If walking up a flight of stairs winds you, it's time to take matters in hand.

If survival isn't a strong motivator here's a good one. Regular cardio exercise has great positive effects on the metabolism. Along with speeding up your heart rate, cardiovascular exercise also increases the rate of various other processes in the body, so burn more stay in better, perhaps trimmer, more toned shape.

And best of all cardio is a drug! When you work out you release endorphins, and other hormones that make you 'feel good'. There is evidence that regular cardio will help ease symptoms of depression and fatigue as well as releasing hormones that decrease the appetite.

Cardio may also help to reduce your muscle soreness and help bring more oxygen rich blood to the muscle tissue improving in the repair and rebuilding process. It also helps relieve some stiffness and pain of arthritis by getting the blood where it needs to go. But don't go overboard. Cardio 3-4 x a week for 20-30 minutes is great. It will do what you need. A day between workouts is a good idea. If you really are a gym rat and love going have your alternate day be specific muscle work outs like the Nautilus system.

If you have diabetes, or have been told you are a candidate for it, or have a family history of diabetes cardiovascular exercise can really help manage this condition. By performing the exercise you will increase your muscle's ability to utilize glucose. Those who exercise regularly tend to have better control of their blood sugars and do not see as many blood sugar swings as those who don't. For diabetes this is increasingly important as they are extremely sensitive to changes in blood sugar levels. Please check with your doctor about an exercise program if you are diabetic.

If you are just getting started, first focus on simply finding an activity that gets you moving and gets your heart rate up. Those are the two key components to what cardio is. Any form of exercise will do, whether it is going for a fast walk, a bike ride or performing in an organized sport.

One last tip. . . It's usually better to increase the intensity of your cardio, rather than the amount of sessions. So work out harder and don't increase the time past what is reasonable. Good luck, and see you at the gym.

Namaste,

Wendy