

Aerobic Exercise Do's and Don'ts

Aerobic exercise is simply any exercise that lasts longer than about three minutes in duration. The exercise (such as long distance biking) is always *sub* maximal in intensity, (the opposite called anaerobic, would be sprinting, weight lifting, or hitting a golf ball, etc), and uses oxygen as the primary energy source.

Benefits of Aerobic Exercise

- burns major calories and greatly assists in weight loss
- reduces blood pressure
- improves lung function
- improves heart and circulatory function
- improves lipid profile (cholesterol)
- reduces total body fat
- improves glucose tolerance (important for diabetics)
- improves longevity
- improves endurance
- enhances feeling of well being

It is important to note that exercise is sometimes not exclusively aerobic or anaerobic. Most exercise is actually a mix of these two types of energy systems. For example, running a 5k road race is primarily an aerobic activity, but your sprint to the finish is primarily anaerobic. It is also important to understand that aerobic and anaerobic exercise are the two major types of cardiovascular exercise.

Every exercise program, style, or modality, has benefits and drawbacks to consider.

Drawbacks of Excessive Aerobic Exercise

- overuse injury
- reduces lean muscle tissue (catabolic)
- reduces ability to optimally gain muscle and strength through weight lifting
- may reduce overall muscular flexibility
- can be very time consuming
- boredom

Aerobic Do's

1. *Do aerobics **after** your weightlifting session.*

Save your energy for a challenging weightlifting session, instead of expending all your effort on the treadmill and then dragging your feet through a weak lifting session. The aerobics session can also assist in removing lactic acid from the blood, which has built up from the weightlifting. Lastly, some trainers such as bodybuilder Frank Sepe feel that since weightlifting burns glycogen as the primary energy source,

performing aerobic exercise after the weights will better help burn fat as an energy source.

2. *Do your hard aerobic workout on an off weightlifting day or as a double session (meaning the weights and aerobics are separated by several hours).*
3. *Learn how to measure your heart rate during the aerobic session.*

Your aerobic heart rate should ideally be in your target heart rate training zone (THR), which is largely based on your age. Although several different formula's exist to figure out one's THR, I still use the simplest: 220 minus your age $\times 70\%$ and 85% .

Simply take your pulse during the workout for 15 seconds and multiply by four. This will tell you how many times your heart beats in a minute (BPM). Then, based on your exercise heart rate and age adjusted THR (see chart below), make any necessary adjustments in speed, incline, or resistance. Keep in mind that many factors can adversely affect heart rate such certain medications, stress, and caffeine.

Unless there is a medical condition present (e.g. pregnancy, hypertension, osteoarthritis) that limits you from pushing a little harder aerobically, I think it is almost a waste of time to not be exercising in your THR zone.

Target Heart Rates		
Age	70%	85%
15	144	174
20	140	170
25	137	166
30	133	162
35	130	157
40	126	153
45	123	149
50	119	145
55	116	140
60	112	136
65	109	132
70	105	128
75	102	124

Aerobic Don'ts

1. *Don't think that you can get into great shape by ONLY exercising aerobically.*

Strength training and flexibility development are essential components of a complete fitness program. A three-hour marathoner that can't do 15 pushups is not in great shape.

2. *Don't do the same aerobic workout every session.*

Mix it up! If you usually walk or run at the same pace every time, try going faster for 2 minutes, and then back to your cruising speed for 2 minutes. Repeat this 4 -8 times. This will help burn more calories, reduce body fat, and help reduce the boredom associated with monotonous aerobics.

Sample Fitness Schedule

Monday

Full body weightlifting session
10 minutes treadmill cool down, easy pace (70% THR)

Tuesday

Aerobic session: steady pace, 20 minutes at 70% - 85% THR
Core training, and stretching

Wednesday

Lower body weightlifting session

Thursday

Aerobic interval training session: warm up for 5 minutes at an easy pace, then pick up the speed to a challenging pace (85% - 90% THR) for 2 minutes. Then reduce intensity for two minutes (70% THR) and repeat 4 – 8 times. Cool down at an easy pace for 5 minutes.

Friday

Upper body and core weightlifting session

Saturday

Aerobic endurance session: at an easy pace (70% THR) exercise for 30 minutes

Sunday

Off

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