

Cardio vs. strength training

A look at the two main types of physical exercise



Regular exercise is more than just good for you – it's a powerful way to improve your physical and mental health.

Most types of exercise fall into one of two categories: cardiovascular exercise (cardio for short, also known as aerobic or endurance exercise) and strength training. Understanding how these two forms of exercise are similar – and different – can help you build a routine that's right for you.

Cardio exercise

Cardio exercise increases your heart rate. During cardio workouts, your heart pumps faster and harder to deliver your muscles the extra oxygen they need.

Examples of cardio exercise



Running



Cycling



High-intensity interval training (HIIT)



Swimming

How much cardio exercise should you get?

150 minutes of moderate cardio
(or 75 minutes of vigorous cardio) a week

What are the main benefits of cardio exercise?

- Burns more calories while you're working out
- Improves heart health and endurance
- Increases energy levels and boosts your mood
- Helps regulate your blood pressure and blood sugar
- Helps prevent illness by boosting your immune system
- Helps you maintain a healthy weight

Strength training

Strength training uses a form of resistance – such as weights, exercise bands, or even your own body – to make your muscles stronger through repetition.

Examples of strength training



Weightlifting



Yoga and barre



Resistance band exercises



Pushups, situps, and squats

How much strength training should you get?

2 times a week

What are the main benefits of strength training?

- Improves metabolism so you burn more calories when you're not working out
- Improves heart health and endurance
- Improves balance and coordination
- Increases your energy levels and boosts your mood
- Helps prevent injury by improving flexibility and bone health
- Helps you maintain a healthy weight

The bottom line

Cardio exercise and strength training each have unique health benefits. Both types of exercise boost your energy and your mood, reduce your risk for illness and disease, and help you maintain a healthy weight. Combining cardio and strength training in your workout routine is the best way to get in shape and stay your healthiest.



Sources: Mayo Clinic website: mayoclinic.org, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: cdc.gov, Medline Plus website: medlineplus.gov.

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