

What's better: cardio or strength training?

A comparison of the two main types of physical exercise

You walk into the gym for an hour of exercise. Do you head to the treadmill or the free weights? Do you work on your heart, or your muscles?

CARDIOVASCULAR EXERCISE is activity that raises your heart rate, like walking, running, biking, swimming, rowing or aerobic workouts.

Cardiovascular exercise can help you:

- Strengthen your heart and keep your arteries clear.
- Control your weight.
- Increase energy levels and boost your mood.
- Prevent illness and reduce health risks.
- Manage conditions like high blood pressure and blood sugar.

Adding intervals to a cardio workout — for example, running or walking faster for one minute and then resuming your normal pace — is a good way to burn calories and build endurance.



STRENGTH TRAINING is exercise that uses resistance or weights to induce muscle contractions. This builds the strength, anaerobic endurance and size of skeletal muscles. Strength-training activities are not sustained over a period of time; instead, they use short bursts of effort. Strength training activities can include weightlifting, resistance band training, yoga and calisthenics.

With strength training, you can:

- Develop stronger muscles and bones.
- Control your weight.
- Increase energy levels and boost your mood.
- Manage conditions like back pain, arthritis, obesity, heart disease and diabetes.
- Sharpen your focus.

It's important to note that strength training does not make women "bulky." Women don't have the levels of testosterone required to develop huge muscles. Another advantage — it can help you avoid the effects of osteoporosis!



Which is better?

BOTH ARE IMPORTANT! A mix of strength and cardio is the ideal exercise combination to help burn calories and stay in shape. Remember though, if you are trying to lose weight, what you eat is just as important. Aim for a few cardio sessions per week (about three), and a few strength-training sessions (two to three).

A HIIT for burning more calories

If your main goal is to burn more calories, consider high intensity interval training or HIIT. These workouts involve repeated bouts of high, intense effort followed by a period of rest.

HIIT workouts tend to burn more calories than traditional workouts, especially after the workout. Please note that this type of workout is not suitable for all physical fitness levels. Check with your doctor before beginning any type of workout.

Sources: WebMD, MayoClinic.org, ACSM.org, HealthStatus.com; USDA Exercise Guidelines by Peggy Norwood.



Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is the trade name of: In Colorado: Rocky Mountain Hospital and Medical Service, Inc. HMO products underwritten by HMO Colorado, Inc. In Connecticut: Anthem Health Plans, Inc. In Indiana: Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. In Kentucky: Anthem Health Plans of Kentucky, Inc. In Maine: Anthem Health Plans of Maine, Inc. In Missouri (excluding 30 counties in the Kansas City area): RightCHOICE® Managed Care, Inc. (RIT), Healthy Alliance® Life Insurance Company (HALIC), and HMO Missouri, Inc. RIT and certain affiliates administer non-HMO benefits underwritten by HALIC and HMO benefits underwritten by HMO Missouri, Inc. RIT and certain affiliates only provide administrative services for self-funded plans and do not underwrite benefits. In Nevada: Rocky Mountain Hospital and Medical Service, Inc. HMO products underwritten by HMO Colorado, Inc., dba HMO Nevada. In New Hampshire: Anthem Health Plans of New Hampshire, Inc. HMO plans are administered by Anthem Health Plans of New Hampshire, Inc. and underwritten by Matthew Thornton Health Plan, Inc. In Ohio: Community Insurance Company. In Virginia: Anthem Health Plans of Virginia, Inc. trades as Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Virginia, and its service area is all of Virginia except for the City of Fairfax, the Town of Vienna, and the area east of State Route 123. In Wisconsin: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Wisconsin (BCBSWI), which underwrites or administers the PPO and indemnity policies; Compcare Health Services Insurance Corporation (Compcare), which underwrites or administers the HMO policies; and Compcare and BCBSWI collectively, which underwrite or administer the POS policies. Independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. ANTHEM is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield names and symbols are registered marks of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.