

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.

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.



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!



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