

# **Exercise: Starting an Exercise Program**

Exercise is very important for good health. Your healthcare provider may tell you that you need to get more exercise. To do this, you will need to get into the habit of exercising so that it becomes part of your normal daily or weekly routine. The best exercise for you is one that you enjoy and that you will do regularly. If you start a jogging program, but hate to jog, you are not likely to keep it up. Find an activity you enjoy, such as basketball, soccer, dance, or hiking. Try to involve family members or friends. Join a team or an exercise class and make it fun.

You can get exercise during your daily activities. For example, take the stairs instead of an elevator, park far away in a parking lot and walk briskly to the store, or walk during your lunch break. The benefits are lifelong - so have fun and stick to it!

## **What is aerobic exercise?**

Aerobic exercise increases your breathing and heart rate. This is important because it helps keep your heart and lungs healthy. Examples include walking, swimming, riding a bike, and dancing. Most team sports are aerobic. Being part of a team sport will give you a chance to exercise several times a week. Tennis, hockey, rowing, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and cross-country running are all good examples of aerobic sports. But, you need to do them briskly so that your heart and breathing rate go up.

## **What is anaerobic exercise?**

Anaerobic exercise is high intensity, strenuous activity such as weight lifting or sprinting. It is done to build strength, improve speed, and lose body fat.

You have the opportunity to do this kind exercise often during the day. Carrying groceries or sprinting to catch a bus are considered anaerobic exercise.

Interval training can be done with many types of exercise, such as running, biking, swimming, or weight lifting. Interval training means that you push hard for a short time, then ease up for a short time. It's usually best if your recovery period is at least 3 times as long as your hard effort. For example, run for 30 seconds, then walk for 2 minutes, run for 30 seconds, walk for 2 minutes and so on. To interval train, repeat these bursts of exercise several times during your workout.

One benefit from anaerobic exercise is that it may raise your metabolic rate for nearly 18 hours after the activity is finished. This means you may burn calories at a faster rate well after the exercise is completed. This can help you lose weight. In contrast, aerobic exercise only raises your metabolic rate for 2 hours.

## **How often and how long should I exercise?**

There are three ways to measure your exercise: frequency, duration, and intensity.

- **Frequency:** This is how often you exercise. Try to get aerobic exercise at least 3 times a week. Doing too much aerobic exercise can lead to overtraining and overuse injuries. Do anaerobic exercise 2 or 3 times a week.
- **Duration:** This is how long you exercise. The goal is to have each exercise workout last 30 to 60 minutes. You may need to work up to this slowly.
- **Intensity:** This is how hard you work when you exercise. To make sure you are getting the most from your exercise, you need to check your heart rate during your workout. A target heart rate is a way to make sure that you are exercising hard enough to help your heart, yet easy enough so you exercise safely.
  - The goal for aerobic exercise is to maintain your target heart rate during your exercise for at least 20 minutes. You can also use your target heart rate to check your progress over time.
  - For anaerobic exercise, use a heart rate monitor during your rest intervals to monitor recovery. You will do a sprint, rest, then do another sprint once your heart rate enters your recovery zone.

After a few weeks of training, you can continue improving your level of fitness by increasing the frequency, duration, or intensity of your exercise. Do not increase all three at the same time.

## How do I figure out my target heart rate?

To figure out your target heart rate, you first need to figure out your maximum heart rate (MHR). To do this, subtract your age from 220. For example, if you are 40 years old, your MHR would be 180 beats per minute.

$$220 - 40 \text{ (years old)} = 180 \text{ beats per minute}$$

Next, figure out your target heart rate. Your target heart rate is based on a percentage of your MHR. For aerobic activity, try to keep your heart rate between 50% and 85% of your MHR. For example, if you are 40 years old your target heart rate range should be 90 to 153 beats per minute.

$$180 \text{ (MHR)} \times 0.5 \text{ (50\%)} = 90 \text{ beats per minute}$$

$$180 \text{ (MHR)} \times 0.85 \text{ (85\%)} = 153 \text{ beats per minute}$$

During exercise, check your pulse from time to time to see if you are within your target heart rate range. Do this by finding your pulse on the thumb side of your wrist or on your neck beside your Adam's apple. Use a clock or watch with a secondhand to count the number of heartbeats in 10 seconds. Multiply that number by 6 to get the number of heartbeats per minute. Some exercise machines will measure your heart rate when you put your hands on special sensors. You can also buy a heart rate monitor that you wear.

For aerobic exercise, if your heart rate is too fast (over your 85% mark) then slow down. If your heart rate is below your 50% mark then you need to pick up your pace.

## **What about warming up and cooling down?**

You should include warm-up and cool-down exercises before and after exercise. Muscles that have not been used are cool. Doing calisthenics and dynamic stretching or walking slowly for 5 to 10 minutes before starting your workout warms your muscles, making them more flexible and less prone to injury.

Right after exercise, let your heart rate return slowly to normal. Walking slowly, for example, will let you cool down and let your heart and breathing return to normal levels. You should also stretch the muscles you used during your exercise. Take 5 to 10 minutes to cool down.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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