

Effective Cardiovascular Exercise Workouts: Plans, Principles and Guidelines

Part 1

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Effective of cardiovascular exercise programs and workout plans must have specific instructions on the frequency, duration and intensity. These are the three important components of cardiovascular exercise that you really need to understand and you need to implement them in your workout plans. In addition, your cardiovascular program should include a warm-up, a cool-down and stretching of the primary muscles used in the exercise.

Workout Plan Guideline #1: Warming Up and Stretching

One very common mistake is stretching before muscles are warmed-up. It is important to stretch after your muscles are warm (after blood has circulated through them). Never stretch a cold muscle. First warm up. A warm-up should be done for at least 5-10 minutes at a low intensity in our work out plans.

Usually, the warm-up is done by doing the same activity as the cardiovascular work out but at an intensity of 50-60 percent of your maximum heart rate (max HR). We'll explain how to obtain your max HR and how to decide the heart rate range for the warm-up, exercise session and cool-down later in our work out plans. After you've warmed-up for 5-10 minutes at a relatively low intensity, your muscles should be warm. To prevent injury and to improve your performance, you should stretch the primary muscles used in the warm-up before proceeding to the cardiovascular exercise work out plans.

Workout Plan Guideline #2: Cooling Down

The cool-down is similar to the warm-up in that it should last 5-10 minutes and be done at a low intensity (50-60 percent of your max HR). After you have completed your cardiovascular exercise work out plans and cooled-down properly, it is now important that you stretch the primary muscles being used. Warming-up, stretching, and cooling-down are very important to every exercise session work out plans. They not only help your performance levels and produce better results, they also drastically decrease your risk of injury.

Workout Plan Guideline #3: Frequency of Exercise

The first component of successful cardiovascular exercise work out plans is the frequency of the exercise, which refers to the number of exercise sessions per week. To improve both your cardiovascular work out plans and to decrease body fat or maintain body fat at optimum levels, you should exercise (cardiovascularly) at least three days a week. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends three to five days a week for most cardiovascular work out plans. Those of you who are very out of shape and/or who are overweight and doing weight-bearing cardiovascular exercise such as an aerobics class or jogging, might want to have at least 36 to 48 hours of rest between workouts to prevent an injury and to promote adequate bone and joint stress recovery.

Workout Plan Guideline #4: Duration of Exercise

The second component of cardiovascular exercise for Effective Work Out Plans is the duration, which refers to the time you've spent exercising. The cardiovascular work out plans, not including the warm-up and cool-down, should vary from 20-60 minutes to gain significant cardiorespiratory work out plans and fat burning benefits. Each time you do your cardiovascular exercise work out plans, try to do at least 20 minutes or more. Of course, the longer you go, the more calories and fat you'll "burn" and the better you'll condition your cardiovascular system. All beginners, especially those who are out of shape, should take a very conservative approach and train at relatively low intensities (50-70 percent of your max HR) for 10-25 minutes. As you get in better shape, you can gradually increase the duration of time you exercise with your work out plans.

It is important that you gradually increase the duration before you increase the intensity of the work out plans. That is, when beginning a walking program for example, be more concerned with increasing the number of minutes of the exercise session before you increase the intensity, by increasing your speed or by walking hilly terrain. Interval training (will be discussed soon) is an effective method of gradually increasing your work out plans intensity.

Workout Plan Guideline #5: Intensity of Exercise

The third and final component of cardiovascular exercise work out plans is intensity. There are several ways to monitor the exercise intensity. The best way to test the intensity is to take your heart rate during the exercise, within the first five minutes of your cardiovascular exercise work out plans and again just before the cool-down.

There are two ways in which you can check your heart rate during your work out plans. The most accurate one is to purchase a heart-rate monitor that you strap around your chest. It will give you feedback on a digital watch that tells you exactly what your heart rate is at a specific time in the exercise work out plans.

The other way to obtain your heart rate is by palpating (feeling) either the carotid artery, the temporal artery, or the radial artery. The easiest site is either the carotid or the radial artery. The carotid artery may be felt by gently placing your index finger on your neck, between the middle of your collar bone and jaw line. Palpating the radial artery is done by placing your index and middle finger on the underside and thumb-side of your wrist.

When you're taking your heart rate you measure it in beats per minute (counting the number of beats for 60 seconds). For convenience, many people take their pulse for 6 seconds and multiply that number by 10, or simply add a zero behind the number just obtained. So, if in 6 seconds you counted 12 beats, that would mean your heart rate was 120 beats per minute (bpm). Although counting for 6 seconds is most convenient, keep in mind that the longer the time interval used, the more accurate the results will be. For example, counting your heart rate for 30 seconds and then multiplying that number by 2 will give a slightly more accurate reading than counting your heart rate for 15 seconds and multiplying by 4, or 10 seconds and multiplying by 6. Whatever time interval you use, be consistent in your work out plans.

Workout Plans Summary

In summary, cardiovascular exercise work out plans should be done a minimum of three times a week, a minimum of 20 minutes per session and intensity should fall within one of the five zones that are monitored by either the palpating method of checking your heart rate or by using the heart rate monitor. People of low functional capacity (out of shape) who are just starting out should begin training at a low intensity, probably in the Healthy Heart Zone.

All cardiovascular exercise workout plans should be done after a 5-10 minute warm-up (at a low intensity of 50-60 percent of your max HR) and a 5-10 minute cool-down (at a low intensity of 50-60 percent of your max HR) should follow. Once your muscles are warm (after warm up) and after the cardiovascular exercise, you should stretch those muscles used in the exercise. For example, after bicycling, stretch your quadriceps, hamstrings, calves, hips, and low back. After doing the rowing machine, stretch your legs, back, biceps, and shoulders.