

Having fun with cardio

For most fitness enthusiasts, the aerobic session is the most dreaded workout because of the lack of options it offers. There's also a lot of misinformation floating around on what's good for you and what's not. Aquarius clears the air, and gives you some fun options, whatever your fitness level. Always hated cardio? You'll love these routines. **TEXT: BERNADETTE ABRAHAM**

DOES THE THOUGHT OF running on a treadmill for an hour bring on visions of boredom and monotony? In order to stay motivated and exercise regularly, variety is the key element. If you're beginning to feel bored with your cardio workouts and need a change of pace, then the following routines can help make exercise fun again and keep you coming back for more.

Before getting started

In order to maximise the effectiveness of the aerobic workout, it is important to address a few aerobic fitness aspects that are often overlooked or misunderstood.

Frequency:

Frequency refers to the number of exercise sessions per week, and is dependent upon the duration and intensity of the aerobic session. For example, walking at a low intensity for a short period of time can warrant more sessions per week. To strengthen the heart and maintain optimum body fat levels, aerobic exercise should be performed at least three days per week with no more than two days rest between sessions. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends three to five days per week for most aerobic programs. In general, those who are beginning weight bearing exercises, such as traditional floor aerobics, jogging, or step training, should have at least 36 to 48 hours of rest between workouts to prevent overuse injuries and promote adequate recovery. This is especially true for those who are overweight.

Duration:

The duration or amount of time that is required to achieve cardiovascular benefits is dependent upon the exercise intensity itself. The greater the intensity and time spent working out, the more energy and calories are burned. Beginners should generally start with 10 to 20 minutes of aerobic conditioning, but those who are very unfit would be better suited for multiple sessions of short durations, such as 5 to 10 minutes. For average fitness levels, durations should last between 15 to 45 minutes, and those who are very fit can exercise between 30 to 60 minutes. Unless someone is training for long distance running or a marathon, it is best to limit the aerobic exercise session to 75 minutes in total, which includes a 5 to 10 minute warm-up and a 5 to 10 minute cool-down. For workouts lasting longer than one hour, the body should be replenished, with a sports drink like Gatorade, AllSport, Met-RX, Powerade or Cytomax.

Intensity:

Intensity refers to the exercise speed or workload. The average exercise intensity for healthy adults is usually between 60 and 85 per cent of their Maximum Heart Rate (MHR) – which is simply 220 minus a person's age. Warming up is important because it allows time for the heart rate to gradually increase to the target range, and the cool-down is just as important since it allows the heart rate to

Facts about fat

- It is important to know that the body uses two different sources of energy during aerobic activity – glucose (blood sugar) or glycogen (stored blood sugar) and/or fatty acids (stored fat). Within three minutes of beginning an aerobic session, the body usually uses the energy from the sugar found in the blood or the stored sugar in the muscle cells and liver. After about 20 minutes of continuous aerobic exercise, the body taps into the fatty acids for energy, which is a great tip for those wanting to lose body fat.

return to normal conditions. Finally, stretching after the warm-up and the cool-down decreases the chances of injury and can reduce muscle soreness.

Workout #1 Beginner Basics

Frequency: 3-5 times per week

Duration: 24 minutes

Intensity: 65%-75% MHR

Equipment: Recumbent bike and elliptical trainer

This routine is ideal for beginners who are not accustomed to regular aerobic exercise because of the minimal stress placed on the joints. It is designed to steadily elevate the

heart rate by increasing the speed and/or the resistance level. The recumbent bike is comfortable and offers back support, and the elliptical trainer is low-impact and weight bearing. Note however, that the same routine can be mimicked on any other type of cardio equipment if these options are not available.

Step 1: Start with a 5-minute warm-up on the recumbent bike and then stretch.

Resume pedalling between 70 and 80 RPM (revolutions per minute) until your heart rate reaches 65 per cent of your Maximum Heart Rate (MHR).

Step 2: Increase the intensity by increasing the resistance or level to maintain the target heart rate range for 7 minutes, while keeping the pedal speed constant.

Step 3: Quickly move to the elliptical trainer and maintain the same heart rate elevation for another 7 minutes.

Step 4: Cool-down for five minutes by gradually reducing the intensity until your heart rate is below 90 beats per minute, and then stretch.

Workout #2

Intermediate Rollercoaster

Frequency: 4-5 times per week

Duration: 45 minutes

Intensity: 60% & 85% MHR

Equipment: Treadmill

This workout allows you to benefit from both low and high intensity training simultaneously. Please note that it is also possible to increase the intensity by increasing the incline on the treadmill. Also, the same routine can be mimicked on another piece of equipment such as the bike or rowing machine, for example, if a treadmill is not available.

Step 1: Begin with a 5-minute warm-up on the treadmill and stretch. Resume until you reach 60 per cent of your maximum heart rate. This could either be a fast paced walk, or a slow jog.

Step 2: Once you've reached a speed that elevates your heart to 60 per cent of your MHR, maintain the intensity for 3 minutes.

Step 3: Next, increase the speed until you reach an intensity that brings you to the high end of your target heart rate range. Maintain that speed for 3 minutes.

Step 4: Continue to alternate between the low and high end of your target heart rate range for 3 minutes each until 12 intervals are completed.

Step 5: Gradually cool-down for a few minutes to bring the heart rate back to normal, and then stretch.

Workout #3

Advanced Sprints

It is highly inadvisable for beginners to incorporate sprinting into their routines, as it can cause shortness of breath, fatigue and week knees, and therefore should only be used by an intermediate or advanced sports person. This workout is more anaerobic because of the

Calculate your heart rate

It is possible to estimate the exercise heart rate by simply placing the fingertips of the index and middle fingers on a pulse site. The pulse can be found either on the inside of the wrist, in line with the base of the thumb, or on the side of the neck just to the side of the larynx. The pulse should be taken for 10 seconds, and then multiplied by 6 to get the number of beats in one minute. For example, a 30-year old beginner should be exercising between 60 and 70% of their Maximum Heart Rate. Therefore, their heart rate range should be between 114 and 133 beats per minute (i.e. $60\%-70\% \times (220 - 30)$).



high intensity and short duration; however it really gets the heart racing and can be a lot of fun. Interval training is a great way to beat boredom, and avoid the plateau effect. Begin using this routine twice per week for a month in addition to your normal resistance training program. It is normal to feel soreness in the abdominals, obliques, hamstrings, quadriceps and hip flexors, therefore this routine can be combined with the resistance training program, or can be done separately on a different day.

Week 1:

Frequency: 2 days per week

Duration: 17 minutes

Intensity: 60% MHR to maximum effort

Equipment: Treadmill or run outdoor

Step 1: Begin with a 5-minute warm-up and stretch. Jog for 1 minute, and then sprint for 15 seconds.

Step 2: Repeat the 1-minute jog followed by a 15-second sprint 6 times. Allow three days of recovery between the next sprint routine.

Step 3: Gradually cool-down with a fast paced walk to bring your heart rate back to normal, and then stretch.

Week 2:

Repeat the same routine as week 1, however complete the jog/sprint cycle 8 times.

Week 3:

Frequency: 3 days per week

Repeat the same routine as the previous week, however complete the jog/sprint cycle 10 times. Also, reduce the number of recovery days to two days instead of three.

Week 4:

Repeat the same routine as week 3, however complete the jog/sprint cycle 12 times.

Workout #4

Kangoo Jumps

Another great cardio alternative is Kangoo Jumps. These bouncy shoes resemble rollerblades; however they have a moon-shaped spring on the bottom of the foot, which creates a great rebound effect. Kangoo Jumps offer a unique and fun aerobic experience without the repetitive jarring on the joints like other workouts provide. These low-impact rebound sport shoes reduce the impact to the ankles, shins, knees, lower back and spine by 40 to 80 per cent, which is essential for those recovering from an injury or who are overweight. Kangoo Jumps definitely gets the heart racing, and also improves the muscular and skeletal system by increasing bone mass – great news for women with osteoporosis! Versatile and fun, Kangoo Jumps can be used indoors and outdoors, and are great for any age. Many Dubai gyms offer kangoo jump classes, and if you want to buy a pair for yourself, visit www.zero4online.com

For more information or to begin your own fitness program, please contact Bernadette Abraham on 050-2832020 or by email Bernadette@mailme.ae.