

• • • **CARDIO** training for fat burning

Cardio workouts are indispensable to an effective training program, not only for burning fat, but also for general good health. By definition, cardio workouts can be any exercise—running, biking, swimming, elliptical machine, stairs, jumping rope—that raises and maintains your heart rate over a predetermined amount of time. By doing cardio, you strengthen your heart and lungs and lower your resting heart rate, which means that, over time, the same effort that produced a 10-minute mile will produce a nine-minute mile. Cardio workouts burn fat. And cardio fitness is what gives you endurance and the ability to persist in sports and in life.

The Benefits of Cardio

- Increases metabolic rate
- Improves cholesterol levels
- Increases growth hormone secretion
- Increases blood flow to the brain, increasing alertness
- Improves digestion
- Reduces stress levels
- Boosts immune-system resistance

Despite all these amazing benefits, there are still people who place cardio workouts in the same category as having their teeth extracted. Whether it's the "boredom" of the stationary bike or the stair climber, or the monotony of the same run, cardio has a bad rap in certain circles. If excuses are preventing you from performing cardio workouts, or if you want to use cardio to take your health and fitness to the next level, follow these tips:

Train with purpose

An intense, focused 20-minute cardio workout can be far more effective than a 40-minute (or longer) workout that lacks purpose and direction. Using high-intensity cardio training is key. Research has shown that a high-intensity interval workout increases your metabolic rate for a longer period of time than a 40-minute low-intensity workout. After a high-intensity workout, your body burns fat throughout the day and even while you're sleeping. This high-intensity level enables you to work out for shorter spans of time and get better results.

Train three times a week

Based on your individual goals, reserve times during the week for your cardio workouts. Performing three cardio workouts per week, accompanied by weight-training workouts and proper nutrition, has been proven to lead to a muscular and fit body.

A cardio workout first thing in the morning is not only a great way to start your day, but it is more efficient and gets your body revved up for the rest of the day. When performed on an empty stomach, cardio enhances your ability to burn fat long after your workout is complete. Getting your workout done in the morning also eliminates the possibility that it can be brushed aside at the end of a busy day.

Train using variety

When considering a cardio workout, you should evaluate it using three criteria:

1. Its capacity to burn bodyfat.
2. Its effect on your cardio conditioning.
3. Whether it can keep you engaged and challenged.



How to Get Maximum Cardio Gains

Bear in mind these essential principles for your cardio workouts:

- Work out three times a week, for about 20 minutes per session.
- Perform your cardio workouts on an empty stomach, preferably first thing in the morning, for maximum fat-burning benefits.
- Drink water before, during (if longer than 20 minutes), and after your workout.
- Always include a warm-up and cool-down, consisting of a brisk walk or slow jog, at the beginning and end of each workout.
- Train in your target heart rate zones. Many pieces of cardio equipment have heart rate monitors that are built into the machines. Or, consider investing in a heart rate monitor, available at sporting goods stores and on the Internet.

There are no rules that say you have to do the same type of workout every time you do cardio, nor are there rules that say you have to do it in your basement or at a gym. Classic cardio activities are running, road biking and swimming, but that's only the beginning of options