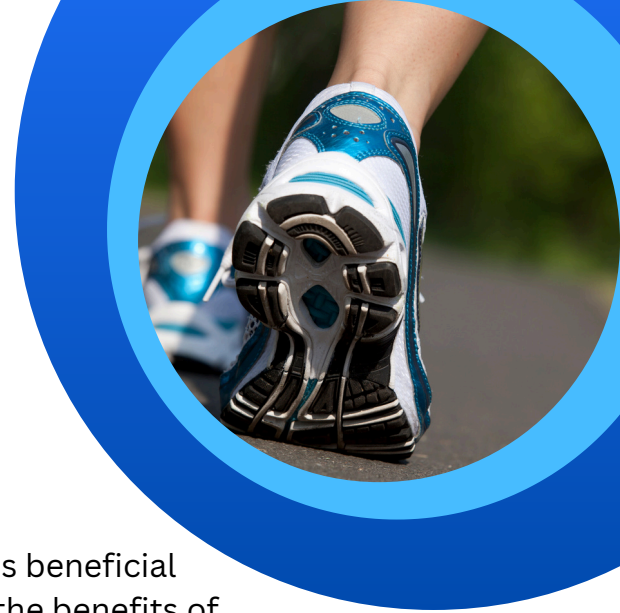


HOW HARD SHOULD YOU EXERCISE?

Choose the right intensity to get the most out of your workout!

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Measuring exercise intensity during aerobic exercise or “cardio” is beneficial because it lets you know if you are working hard enough to reap the benefits of exercise. While any movement is better than none, we can maximize the health benefits and reach our fitness goals if we work at the right intensity. There are several ways to measure exercise intensity during aerobic exercise, but we will focus on heart rate and RPE, or Rating of Perceived Exertion.

RPE: Rating of Perceived Exertion

RPE is an easy to use method for gauging exercise intensity as it only requires an estimate of how you feel during exercise. At any point in your exercise session, simply choose a number according to the RPE scale shown here. This is a good method to use if you don't have any kind of fitness tracker or if you have a difficult time finding your pulse. The downside is that it may not be an accurate assessment of your actual intensity. If you decide to use this method, aim for an RPE of 4-6 for a moderate intensity workout, or 7-8 for a harder session. You should never feel like you are near a 10 unless your goal is to perform a workout at maximum intensity.

RPE SCALE

10	MAX EFFORT ACTIVITY Feels almost impossible to keep going. Completely out of breath, unable to talk. Cannot maintain for more than a very short time.
9	VERY HARD ACTIVITY Very difficult to maintain exercise intensity. Can barely breathe and speak only a few words.
7-8	VIGOROUS ACTIVITY Borderline uncomfortable. Short of breath, can speak a sentence.
4-6	MODERATE ACTIVITY Breathing heavily, can hold a short conversation. Still somewhat comfortable, but becoming noticeably more challenging.
2-3	LIGHT ACTIVITY Feels like you can maintain for hours. Easy to breathe and carry a conversation.
1	VERY LIGHT ACTIVITY Hardly any exertion, but more than sleeping, slow walk, etc.

Heart Rate

Measuring your heart rate during exercise is a more accurate way to determine if you are exercising hard enough. The easiest way to measure your heart rate is with a fitness tracker or heart rate monitor (Apple Watch, Fit Bit, etc.), but you can also manually take your heart rate by finding your pulse on your wrist (radial pulse) or neck (carotid pulse).



To find your resting heart rate (RHR) using your radial pulse, place your index and middle finger of your right hand at the base of your thumb, then slide your fingers down to the underside of the wrist. When you locate your pulse, count how many beats you feel in a 30-second period. Multiply this number by 2 to get your heart rate in beats per minute (bpm).

If you are having trouble finding your radial pulse, you can try the carotid pulse in the neck area. To find this pulse, place your middle and index fingers on your jaw just below your ear and slide your fingers down until they are just under your jaw bone and you feel the softer neck tissue. Again, count how many times you feel a beat in a 30-second period, and multiply by 2 to get your heart rate in bpm.



A normal resting heart rate is between 60-80 bpm, however it is not uncommon for some individuals to have a heart rate between 50 and 60 bpm, especially if they are very fit. It may also be above 80 bpm if you weren't fully rested, or if you just have a resting heart rate that is higher than the norm. Regular exercise can improve your aerobic fitness and strengthen your heart, helping to lower your resting heart rate.

The key to getting a benefit from aerobic exercise is to work at an intensity that aligns with your health and fitness goals. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends that most people exercise at least at a moderate intensity, which is equal to 64-76% of your maximum heart rate (MHR). You can find your MHR by subtracting your age from 220. Then, multiply your MHR by the percentages that match the desired intensity range to get the heart range you should achieve during your session. Aim for maintaining your heart rate in this range for at least 20 minutes.

To meet the minimum physical activity recommendations, perform a 30-minute session of your preferred aerobic exercise 5 days per week. If you want to save some time but are willing to work a little harder, you can perform vigorous activity for 20 -minutes 3 times per week instead! Just use the percentages associated with vigorous activity to estimate your target heart rate range. You may notice you need to work harder to reach your target. Don't worry- this is just means your heart is getting stronger and you are getting more fit!

Find Your Target Heart Rate Range

(Moderate Intensity)

- 1** Calculate your Max Heart Rate:
 $MHR = 220 - \text{age}$
- 2** Multiply your MHR by the low percentage :
 $\text{Low target} = MHR \times .64$
- 3** Multiply your MHR by the high percentage:
 $\text{High target} = MHR \times .76$
- 4** Your target range is:
 $\text{Low Target} - \text{High Target}$

Exercise Intensity Percentages

Low Intensity:
50-64%

Moderate Intensity
64-76%

Vigorous/High Intensity
77-93%