



### Aerobic Exercise

**Fact:**

"Aerobic" means "with oxygen."

**Fiction:**

It's a myth that only very intense exercise will provide health benefits.

### Understanding Aerobic Exercise

Aerobic exercise is any large muscle activity that is sustained for two to three minutes or longer.\* This requires the heart and lungs to work together to supply oxygen to the tissues in the body.

The minute you begin to exercise, your metabolic rate (the amount of energy you expend) increases from between 5 to 20 times the amount you expend sitting down.

### Benefits of Aerobic Exercise

For health benefits, spend at least 20 minutes exercising each time for a total of at least three hours of aerobic exercise each week.

Aerobic exercise offers incredible benefits. It can:

- Strengthen your heart and make it more efficient
- Improve the ability of your muscles to use oxygen
- Reduce your risks of heart attack and stroke
- Improve your cholesterol level
- Put pressure on the bones increasing bone strength and density
- Increase the brain chemicals (endorphins) that improve mood and sense of well-being
- Increase your endurance by one-third or more
- Enhance the blood supply to your body
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce body fat
- Relieve stress and prevent or reduce mental depression
- Control weight by burning excess calories and by increasing your metabolism so your body burns more calories
- Prevent or reduce back pain by increasing flexibility and strength

Add muscle-strengthening exercises to your routine for total health.

### Check with Your Doctor

It's always a good idea to check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program. It's especially important if you:

- Have heart problems
- Have chest pains or dizzy spells
- Have high blood pressure
- Have joint or bone problems
- Are over 65

- Are taking prescription medications

If you have been inactive for a while, start slowly.

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## Types of Aerobic Exercise

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Aerobic activities include:

- Walking or hiking
- Walking up the stairs instead of taking the elevator
- Gardening
- Sports
- Raking leaves
- Mowing the lawn
- Housework
- Lap swimming

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## The Target Zone

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For maximum benefits, you should exercise strenuously enough to raise your heart rate to your target zone—that is, 50 to 75% of your maximum heart rate. Beginners should usually start in the lower part of the zone. When you first begin to work out, check with your physician to see if these zones are right for you.

To see if you are exercising within your target zone, count the number of pulse beats at your neck or wrist for 15 seconds, and then multiply times four. If your heart is beating faster than the target zone rate, slow down. If slower, exercise harder.

Target Heart Rate Zones*		
Age	Target Heart Rate Zone (50%-75%)	Average Maximum Heart Rate (100%)
20-30 years	98-146 beats per minute	195 beats per minute
31-40	93-138	185
41-50	88-131	175
51-60	83-123	165
61+	78-116	155

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## Restarting After You Stop

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If you've taken a break from your fitness routine, don't let that stop you. Forgive yourself for the bump in the road, and move on. Also, consider why you stopped. Did time constraints get in the way? Maybe you can rework your schedule. Did you get bored? A change of jogging route, a new pair of shoes, or a change of activity to something you enjoy more may help. And don't try to make up for lost time. Start with something reasonable and achievable, and eventually intensify your program.

The best tip of all? Do some kind of activity today.

\* IntelliHealth