



# Be Well Aware – Health Article



## Different Types of Cardio Exercise and Their Benefits

### What is Cardio?

Cardio exercises are any activities that raise your heart rate by at least 50 percent. It is also known as aerobic exercise because it relies heavily on oxygen to sustain the activity. It could also be considered strength training for the heart because it increases the performance of the heart muscle, along with the circulatory system and lungs. But you don't have to go all out to reap benefits from cardio exercise. The benefits of cardio exercise go beyond your heart and include weight loss, improved mood, improved sleep and energy, and reduced stress.

The Physical Activity Guidelines issued by the U.S Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) recommend at least 150 minutes each week of moderate-intensity physical activity, which could be divided into 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.

### Types of Cardio Exercise

Cardio can be categorized based on intensity and duration. The two extremes are LISS (low intensity steady state) and HIIT (high intensity interval training). There is a wide range in between these two extremes.

### Low Intensity Cardio

Low intensity cardio increases your heart rate but allows you to continue the activity for an extended period. Some benefits of low intensity cardio are that it is great for beginner exercisers and easier on the joints. These activities are often more leisurely and enjoyable – it may not even feel like exercise. Another bonus is that longer activities (lasting about 90 minutes or more) will encourage your body to burn more fat, rather than glucose, for fuel. Examples of low intensity cardio include walking, hiking, and swimming.



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## High Intensity Cardio

High intensity cardio is an all-out effort usually for a short period. It is difficult to sustain because it increases your heart rate up to the maximum. A benefit of high intensity exercise is that it requires less time – in fact, the USDHHS guidelines are cut in half, just 75 minutes of vigorous intensity each week meets the recommendation. An experienced exerciser can increase the intensity and burn more calories in less time. However more recovery time is required between exercises and exercise sessions, and it can be harder on the joints. Examples of high intensity cardio include running, jumping rope, and burpees. It is more manageable to walk for 30 minutes than do burpees continuously for 30 minutes.

## The Best Cardio Option

The best option is a mix of both HIIT and LISS to maximize efficiency, reduce recovery time, use both glucose and fat for fuel sources, and present options for a variety of activities.

The best exercises are the ones that you enjoy - bonus if it allows you to connect with friends and family. Perhaps you attend a 30-minute HIIT class with a friend on Monday, take a 45-minute walk with your spouse after dinner on Tuesday and Thursday, enjoy a 30-minute swim on Wednesday, and a 90-minute family bike ride on Saturday. Varying your cardio exercise will keep you engaged and help you establish this heart-healthy habit.



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### References:

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