

Cardiovascular Exercise vs Weight Training

All exercisers, whether beginners or old hands, will ask themselves at some point if they should switch to an all-cardio or all-weight training program. Trainers are asked this question every day in gyms across America and more curious folks write in to fitness columns to pose the query. Does it really matter if you do all-cardio or all-weights? The short answer to this question is yes, it does matter.

Cardiovascular exercise primarily focuses on developing and strengthening the cardiovascular system through aerobic training. This means strengthening your heart, lungs, and blood vessels so that they all work more efficiently, both together and individually. By training the body to meet higher and higher levels of aerobic endurance, you increase the efficacy of your system. This is a fantastic move to make your present life easier and more pleasant, but it's also a smart move to prepare for later life. Research proves over and over again that adults who maintain a high level of fitness throughout early and middle life end up living fuller, more productive lives as seniors. That's in addition to living longer than people who don't exercise. The benefits of cardiovascular exercise are nearly too numerous to list: lower blood pressure, lower "bad" cholesterol and higher "good", decreased incidence of heart attack and stroke, decreased risk of osteoporosis, overall decreased risk of most cancers, increased life span and more. Cardiovascular or aerobic exercise is the smartest choice around ? or is it?

Weight training aims to strengthen the muscles by lifting weights. By increasing the overall strength of the muscles in the body, the support of the body is increased and plans for greater ease of living. Since the muscles connect to each other and all essentially hold up the skeleton, without them there could be no way to move to exercise. People who lift weights are shown to have some of the same characteristics as those who engage in cardiovascular exercise. Weight-lifters also experience a decreased risk of bone fractures since the weights help build bone through the resistance. Lifting weights is surely the best approach to fitness ? right?

In reality, the number one way to achieve ultimate fitness in your life is to combine the two approaches of aerobic exercise and strength training to boost your health to the optimum level. The two methods, though targeting various systems, form a beautiful relationship that works together to develop and build all aspects of the body to create the strongest, healthiest body possible. Cardiovascular exercise strengthens the lungs and allows the body to build up stamina. Weight training uses that stamina to build muscles for longer periods of time. The muscles then act in their roles as support team for the skeleton and organs, and can work more efficiently. The increased efficiency of the body means that it can develop greater aerobic capacity through exercise ? and you see how the cycle begins again. Cardio and strength training feed off each other to develop your best body ever.

The next question should be obvious: what's the best combination aerobic and strength training workout? The answer to this is swimming. Swimming is the ultimate aerobic conditioner as well as muscle builder. Thanks to the buoyancy you experience underwater, your muscles can concentrate more on working than on supporting your body. Doing all those laps, though, requires a ideal deal of aerobic stamina. Thus all of your body's systems get a thorough workout when you swim. One recommended program is to swim a certain number of laps in the pool but on each lap, swim a different style. On your first lap, swim freestyle to get into the groove and warm your muscles. On your second lap, swim breaststroke. Do backstroke on the third. Rotate the strokes so that your muscles are continually surprised and challenged. Do this as your swimming workout four to five times a week and you will be amazed at the change in your body both in shape and in endurance.

The smart exerciser knows that there's no choosing between cardiovascular exercise and weight training. The best programs always incorporate a variety of the two to give maximum development and strength. Begin adding your own combination workouts to your schedule and be delighted as your body starts to truly reinvent itself.

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About the Author

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