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Rules of Cardiovascular Exercise

Cardiovascular exercise refers to repetitive activity designed to strengthen the muscles involved in breathing, strengthen the heart muscle, burn fat, build endurance, and improve the tone of the skeletal muscles and blood vessels.

1 Pick your form of Cardio

There are many forms of cardiovascular exercise. Choose a method that is both appealing, and appropriate to your ability:

- Running
- Jogging
- Walking
- Skipping
- Swimming
- Rowing
- Stair Climbing
- Cycling
- Exercise Circuits
- Elliptical Machines
- Aerobic Exercise Class
- Rollerblading
- Cross Trainer Machines
- Kickboxing
- Punching Bag Work
- Kettlebell Exercise
- Basketball
- Squash
- Tennis
- Dodgeball

2 Wait an hour after eating

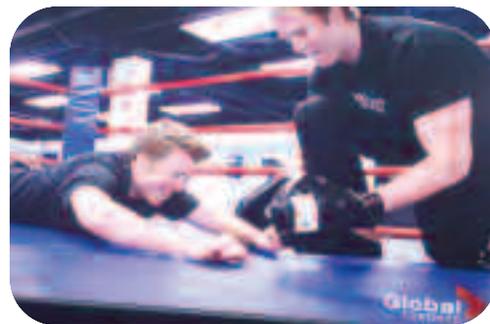
When the stomach is full, it raises the diaphragm, which makes it more difficult to breathe. Additionally, the body requires blood for both digestion and muscle function, so when you try to exercise on a full stomach, the result is often a muscle cramp. This can be very dangerous if one is swimming in open water.

3 Prepare for the Weather

Due to risk of heat exhaustion and sunstroke, it is not advised to exercise outdoors when the temperature is warmer than 37 degrees Celsius (98°F).

To prevent overexposure to the sun, try to exercise in a shaded area, wear a hat, and apply sunscreen if necessary.

When the weather is cold, it is generally considered acceptable to exercise as long as you dress appropriately. Remember, many layers of clothing are more insulating than one big layer. Additionally, a great deal of body heat is lost through the top of the head, so be sure to wear a winter hat to prevent excessive loss of body heat.



KICKBOXING IS USED TO CHALLENGE THE HEART AND LUNGS.

4 Avoid air pollution

Oxygen travels to the muscles by hitching a ride on red blood cells (hemoglobin). However, carbon monoxide emissions from cars have over 200 times better binding ability than oxygen. The result is that your red blood cells become saturated with carbon monoxide, not oxygen, and you become breathless and fatigued at a much lower intensity. To perform at your best:

- Limit walking or running on busy streets
- Avoid outdoor exercise on smog days
- Limit outdoor exercise when air pollution is at its highest, usually between 7-10 am and 4-7 pm.

5 Protect your feet

- Prevent blisters by wearing proper fitting shoes to reduce friction. Wearing two pairs of socks can also reduce friction and prevent blisters.
- Rotate your shoes from one workout to the next: Shoes undergo a compression period when used, and require about 48 hours until they rebound, and are best able to absorb shock again.
- Use forgiving surfaces: It is advised to run or walk on beach sand or grass when possible. The shock of exercising on a hard surface is transmitted up your body with every step you take, potentially resulting in repetitive stress injuries.

6 Use Appropriate Intensity

What may induce breathlessness for some, could be light work for others. It is important to maintain an intensity that is relatively challenging for you, keeping your pulse in the Target Heart Rate:

Predicted Max HR = 220 - your age

Target Heart Rate = 70-90% of predicted Max HR

For example, a 50 year old would need to exercise at an intensity that keeps their heart rate between 119 and 153 beats per minute.

Many cardio machines in fitness facilities have the capability to measure your heart rate, allowing you to monitor your intensity. You may also choose to wear a personal heart rate monitor, which involves both a watch and heart rate strap.

7 Use Appropriate Frequency

Most people benefit by performing 3-5 cardio sessions a week, for 25 to 55 minutes within their target heart rate zone. If you cannot complete a minimum of 25 consecutive minutes, split the exercise into multiple segments that combine to a daily total of at least 25 minutes. Progress towards going non-stop.

8 Keep It Fun!

- Here are some ideas to add some fun to your cardio workouts:
- Try a new sport, or cardio activity.
 - Do your cardio with a friend, so that you can catch up on the latest.
 - Explore new terrain with the family dog.
 - Put a kid seat on the back of your bike, and turn your exercise session into a family adventure.
 - Get your cardio in by circuiting your resistance training exercises so that there are no rests breaks.
 - Make it a rule to only watch the News while walking on the treadmill.
 - Make it a game! For example, take the distances traveled in your cardio workouts, and compare them to actual distances on a map. Race your friends, family, and co-workers in an adventure race across Canada! Sound fun? Visit FoxFitness.ca to sign up for your complimentary membership.



- If all else fails, go for a run with the most annoying person you know. Before you know it, you'll be walking or running faster than ever before!

Know Your Potential

Being in good shape helps you perform your best, both mentally, and physically. Studies have consistently shown that fatigued individuals tend to accept lower standards, make more errors, and react to emergencies slower.

Regular cardiovascular exercise improves your endurance which builds resistance to fatigue, and decreases mental and physical errors. If you wish to keep mentally sharp, excel at your favorite sport, be able to walk with others without becoming breathless, or be able to keep up with your kids, than a regular exercise program is one of the best investments you can make!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

B.J. Fox is a Toronto based Kinesiologist with over 16 certifications in the areas of fitness, nutrition, and rehab. B.J. specializes in helping busy people get fit by working smarter, not harder. As a certified Endurance Fitness Trainer (EFT), he specializes in cardio training. For more information, visit www.Foxfitness.ca.