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The Best Cardio Workouts for the Treadmill

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Cardiovascular conditioning (cardio) is a key element of total body fitness. The treadmill is a useful tool to develop your cardio in the gym. Simply walking or jogging on the treadmill can provide some cardio benefit, but random workouts can never be as effective as a focused, planned training program. When developing a cardio training plan, there are several workouts that have been shown to provide maximum benefit.



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Basic Running and Jogging

Use a heart rate monitor and stopwatch to make basic jogging and running on the treadmill more effective. Keep yourself in your [target heart rate](#) training zone (THRZ), to maximize the amount of benefit you receive from your training.

Work for a minimum of 20 minutes, keeping your heart rate in your THRZ. While there are many methods to determine your THRZ, in their book "Morning Cardio Workouts" June Kahn and Lawrence Biscontini use one common method. Subtract your age from the base number of 220. Use the result as your maximum heart rate (MHR). Determine the values of 55 and 70 percent of your MHR. Use those numbers as the outside limits of your THRZ.

Tabata Intervals

Avoid Tabata intervals, a sustained duration cardio, if you want to build lean body mass. According to strength coach Robert Kennedy, Tabata interval training is a better solution for those who want cardio training benefits without additional weight loss.

Tabata intervals were developed by researchers for the Japanese Olympic team, led by Dr. Tabata. Use your stop watch to time your Tabata intervals. In his classic book "Escalating Density Training," strength coach Charles Staley describes Tabata intervals as the best cardio training method for strength and physique athletes.

Walk on the treadmill for a few minutes to warm up. Sprint as fast you can on the treadmill for 20 seconds. Rest or walk for 10 seconds. Repeat this pattern for a total of eight repetitions.

Other Interval Training

Other interval training methods are useful for developing the benefits of cardio training. Run for a specified duration of 20 to 60 seconds and follow your work period with a walking rest interval of anywhere from 40 to 120 seconds.

Aim for a rest interval of twice the length of your work periods. According to strength coach Craig Ballantyne, in his book "Just Say No to Cardio!" the goal should be a 2:1 ratio of rest-to-work for the maximum benefit in your training.

Use interval training as your training method if Tabata intervals are too intense for your current conditioning level but you still want the benefits of training both your aerobic and anaerobic cardio systems.

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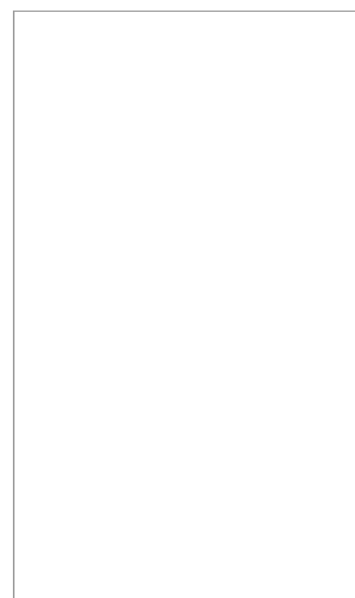
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References

- "Morning Cardio Workouts;" June Kahn and Lawrence Biscontini; 2006
- "Just Say No to Cardio!" Craig Ballantyne; 2008
- "Escalating Density Training;" Charles Staley; 2005

About this Author

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Article reviewed by Elizabeth Ahders

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