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# Cardio and Weight Loss Exercises and Equipment

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# Cardio and Weight Loss Exercises and Equipment

## Aerobics Fan? Be Sure You Have These Tools to Work Up a Sweat

Aerobics is a great way to get into shape and burn calories. Plus, it has the benefit of not needing a lot of fancy equipment to do – you can get aerobic exercise just walking around your neighborhood. Here are some things to consider when getting ready to work up a sweat.

First it is helpful to know what type of aerobic exercises you plan on doing. Having a variety of workouts available will not only help you to use different muscle groups, but it will add variety to keep you from getting bored. That is very important when you are coming up with a workout plan to stick with. If you are a beginner, you might consider starting out with a Fitness video to try a new exercise out.

This will give you a taste of the exercise as well as show you proper techniques. Another option is to try out classes at your local gym or fitness center. That way you can borrow their equipment before you decide what you should purchase for your own home.

A lot of low- to moderate-impact exercises can be done outside of the home. Walking, for example, can be done just about anywhere and is a good calorie burner. Make sure that you wear comfortable, weather appropriate clothing and well-supportive shoes. An alternative to leaving your home is to get a treadmill. This can offer you a variety of resistances and speeds without having to worry about the weather. It can also be used for jogging if you prefer a higher-impact workout.

Swimming is a great way to get aerobic exercise, and all you need is a comfortable suit and a pool. If you are not one of the lucky ones with a swimming pool in your backyard, consider your local community pool. Many will offer “adults only” time periods where you could actually get some laps in. Others will offer water aerobics classes, which are a fun way to lose weight and perfect for those with joint problems.

Stair climbing can be a good way to get aerobic exercise. If you do not live in a high rise apartment or work in a multi-storied office building you might consider getting a step machine. These offer a variety of resistances that can be increased as your skill progresses. Or you can utilize the same motion in a step class with upbeat music and an instructor.

Rowing and cross-country skiing are also great for aerobic exercise. If you do not own a boat or do not enjoy the snow, there are machine equivalents for these as well. Rowing is great for an upper body workout, however, take care that you know how to use the equipment properly to avoid injuring your back. Cross-country ski machines can offer a good whole-body workout, but require some skill to master.

Higher-impact aerobics, such as tennis, racquetball, and squash are a fun alternative to do. Since these require a special court, you might look into a membership at a local gym or

community center. Care should be used before attempting higher-impact aerobics if you are overweight, elderly, have an injury, or just are not used to working out. Jump roping is another high-impact aerobic that can be done from your own home. Ensure that the rope is long enough to use comfortably.

For all aerobic workouts, some of the most important equipment is the clothing. Shoes should be well made and fit well, with plenty of traction. They should be supportive and provide good cushioning. Make sure to air them out after exercising to prevent skin conditions like athlete's foot. Clothing should be safe and comfortable. If jogging or walking outside after dark, make sure to have on light-colored clothing with reflectors. Also be sure to wear any safety equipment necessary for your sport, such as helmets, wrist guards and goggles.

Workout equipment in your home should be of good quality and in good repair. Never use a machine that appears to be damaged. A good floor mat that cushions impact is a must for any indoor workouts requiring floor work.

Regardless of what type of aerobic exercise you decide on, with a minimum amount of equipment you can get started on those workout goals today.

### **Treading Water - Why Swimming Makes for a Great Workout**

Remember the days when summer was almost near, and you couldn't wait to go out and swim a little when you were a child? Maybe though you never learned how to swim, and don't realize the physical and emotional benefits of swimming. Swimming is a lot of fun, and it's the best exercise that you can do for your health, in fact medical studies have proved it. Learn about some of the benefits, and how swimming correctly can get you healthy, and emotionally invigorated too.

Swimming has a lot of benefits that you might not realize. It gets your body into shape by building up your muscle strength, and enables you to physically keep going, or stamina. It has another great benefit too; it builds flexibility for fluid motion. For the elderly or those with joint or muscular problems this is a good way to exercise.

The weight of the water provides resistance, but the buoyancy gives support to your body, and it's easier to exercise. Swimming will allow you to build up your cardiovascular system too. Even if you don't have any serious health issues, it might be a good idea to check with your doctor anyway. It's always better to be safe than sorry.

Another good thing about using swimming as an exercise routine is that you can build up according to your schedule. You can start out with a gentle swim of hand over hand, and then go up to harder routines, like the breaststroke. However, be careful with using the breaststroke, if you have knee problems.

This movement in the water can pull the knee and ligaments out of balance. That's another reason that a good check up with your doctor is advisable. After you've had enough time in the water, you could use water aerobics to enhance the workout in the pool. Water aerobics get all

of your large muscles moving, like your upper thighs and arms. More importantly, it gets your heart rate up and consistent when doing it in a synchronized pattern.

When you go and swim make sure to do it often. You don't have to do a long stretch of exercise in the water, but everyday or every other day is best. In fact medical studies have shown that physically it's better for you to swim for shorter periods of time. By swimming for shorter periods you'll also eliminate boredom from routine.

Of course, you can help with that mental aspect by changing up your routines, only after you mastered the endurance level. 30 minutes of swimming is a good way to begin, and it will give you the maximum benefits too. When going out to swim, take along a friend too, or swim in with a group of people, it will keep you from giving up on getting fit.

To get the most out of your swimming, learn to swim in the right way by know the techniques of it. Know how to do the doggie paddle, breaststroke and other types of styles in swimming. If you don't your just wasting energy, and you won't get the benefits you need. When you're in the pool workout practicing on your technique skills, so you'll be a better swimmer.

It doesn't matter when you do it, it's really just a personal preference, but make sure to take the time to. Don't always do hard techniques, but switch it up with easy ones too. However you do it, just make sure it flows from one routine to another.

Before going into the water to swim, go out and purchase the correct swim wear. Wearing the incorrect clothing, like shorts and summer time shirts, will throw off your entire swim routine. It might be a little intimidating at first, stepping into the pool, especially if you've got a few pounds to loose, but that is another reason you're swimming, to get rid of that excess weight, and get tone.

For extra resistance, go into the pool, if allowed, with some flippers on. Wearing flippers will help you learn what a correct body position is in water. You want to swim with your head lower in the pool than your legs. If you don't this is how your legs sink, and you can't get a full body workout, and the benefits.

Keep practicing with improving your swimming skills, or even learning how to swim. You'll love the way you look and feel, and in the long run your body will thank you for the needed exercise. It's a lot of fun, and you can help others be fit and trim by swimming with a partner. You might just make a new friend too.

### **Beneficial Tools for a Great Workout in Your Pool**

Water can be a great addition to any workout. It decreases impact, making it great for those with joint problems. It provides resistance, making it a refreshing change to your regular jogging routine. With indoor pools at many health centers, it can now be done any time of the year. Not to mention that it is just plain fun! While you can limit your workout to just water aerobics or swimming, there are also some tools that can make your workout even better.

The most important thing for the pool is also the most obvious – your swimsuit. Save your string bikinis for sun bathing on the beach. For working out in the pool, you want a suit that fits comfortably without the fear of anything falling out in the middle of your routine. You should be able to move comfortably.

If you do not have the perfect swimsuit body, do not let that discourage you from doing a pool workout. Remember, part of your goal is to get that swimsuit body, and others in your class may be striving for similar goals. You should be able to find a suit that is flattering as well as functional. Consider a tankini or swimsuit with attached skirt to hide problem areas.

You may want to consider getting a buoyancy belt for doing your exercises in the pool. Buoyancy belts fit like a weight lifting belt and help you to maintain an upright position in the pool. Usually made of heavy-duty foam, they come in a variety of sizes to help you find your perfect fit.

The biggest thing you are working with in the pool is resistance. There are several products out there that can help you increase resistance and improve your workout.

Starting with your feet, you may want to get to consider something to increase drag. You can get “shoes” to wear on your feet or ankle cuffs. Increasing your drag increases the difficulty of the exercise, which will cause you to burn more calories or help you with plateaus in your workout program. Wearing resistance “shoes” in the pool also makes it possible to do inner/outer thigh, knee flexion/extension, and hip flexion/extension exercises. Made of heavy foam, both “shoes” and cuffs are generally one size fits all.

For workouts of your upper body, you can use cuffs on your arms to increase resistance. Or consider getting foam dumbbells to use during your workouts. The dumbbells come in different shapes and sizes to give varying amounts of intensity to your workout. A variation of dumbbells is a water paddle – these vary the resistance depending on how you hold them in the water. Or you can get webbed water gloves that increase the amount of resistance as you move through the water.

If you need some stabilization while in the water, consider getting a bar. Looking a lot like a bar used for bench pressing but made of foam; these can be used as a flotation device for young children, a stabilizer device for adults learning to work out in the water, or use it to increase resistance during your exercises. The larger the foam rounds on the end the more resistance in the water.

If you have a small pool or limited space to do your workout, you can consider a hitch. The hitch attaches to the back of a buoyancy belt and to the side of the pool. It is elastic, so you get your resistance keeping the line taught. It works great for when you have to remain in one place during your workout – almost like having a treadmill in the pool.

If you have increased your workout capacity beyond the resistance that foam dumbbells and cuffs can provide, you can consider adding weight to your workout. Waterproof wrist, ankle, and back weights are available to add some more punch back into your workout.

No matter what equipment you decide to get, always consider your safety first. Follow all precautions of starting an exercise routine, and always do so under the supervision of a doctor. If you feel tired or experience pain, weakness or dizziness get out of the pool and seek medical attention. Using common sense can make your pool work out safe and effective.

## **Heart Health at Home – Dig Out Your Jump Rope**

When you mention jump ropes, your first thought might be of little kids on the playground, skipping and chanting together. If you think about it a bit longer, you might move on from this nostalgic image to picturing pro athletes or boxers training in the gym, or you may even recall having seen someone on TV doing spectacular tricks with a jump rope.

Jumping rope has been a pastime of children for centuries, and a part of exercise routines for decades. However, jump ropes are more than just toys or tools for the hard-core trainer. Jumping rope can be an excellent aerobic exercise for anyone, no matter what budget, space, or time constraints they have.

Jumping is an aerobic, high-impact exercise. Aerobic exercises strengthen your heart and your lungs, while high-impact exercises help increase the density of your bones, and reduce the likelihood of osteoporosis. Jumping rope also helps develop your endurance and speed, along with coordination, rhythm, and timing.

It can also be a lot of fun, which will improve any workout. Along with all of these benefits, one of the greatest advantages of jumping rope is the fact that jump ropes are small and inexpensive. Decent jump ropes can be found for as little as five dollars, and they can fit into almost any bag, which makes them the perfect choice for people who spend a lot of time traveling.

Jump rope routines can be very simple or very complex. There are many instructional videos, books, magazine articles, and online sites that can describe the different jumps and moves; or, if you prefer, an instructor at your local gym can help you get started. If you're just picking up a jump rope for the first time (or, at least, for the first time since you were a child), start with the basic jump: holding the handles in each hand, stand with the rope behind your feet; then swing the rope over your head, and as it comes back down to your feet, jump over it.

Once you have gotten used to that, you can vary it with slightly more complicated moves. Try crossing your arms as you jump, or twisting your body, or swinging the jump rope in the opposite direction. If you feel the need for a real challenge, try the double under, where you swing the rope under your feet twice in one jump. Once you've mastered that, you can try for the triple jump, the quadruple, or more. The world record for consecutive triple unders is 320, but if you can't quite make it that far, don't get discouraged. Just keep going and enjoy yourself!

Although the basic design of jump ropes has not changed much over the centuries, today's technology does mean that there are many variations to choose from. Jump ropes made from

different materials, such as nylon cord or plastic beads, can affect the weight, speed, and durability of a jump rope.

Handles can be made from wood, plastic, or rubber foam, and can be shaped to more comfortably fit your hand. Some jump ropes even have counters or heart rate monitors built into the handle, so you can keep track of how much exercise you've gotten. These options can affect the price, as well, so consider whether or not you're going to actually use such features before buying it.

Remember to follow basic safety guidelines as you're jumping. Make sure that you have plenty of room to swing the rope without hitting another person or the ceiling (or worse, the ceiling fan!). Wear comfortable clothing and shoes that will support your body as you jump. High impact exercise can also put a lot of stress on your joints, so take care of those ankles and knees, and if you already have health problems, check with your doctor before starting this or any exercise program.

Jump ropes are a great way to get in shape, especially when combined with other exercises that cover stretching and weight training to create a workout that gets your entire body in shape. Jumping rope has been around for a long time, and can probably help you stick around for a little while longer, too.

## **Martial Arts Can Strike a Balance Both Physically and Mentally in Your Exercise Regiment**

Martial arts may be the very thing you are looking for if you want something unique to add to your exercise regiment. Since it has the benefit of exercising both your mind and body you get a complete workout that aerobics or weight lifting just can't match.

Physically, martial arts are hard to beat. Many forms can help you burn calories and fat, along with building strength and endurance. How does burning up to 600 calories an hour sound? Before you begin, you have to first find the style that is good for you.

If you are looking for something with full body training, Judo might be your choice. Judo means "the gentle way" and focuses more on self-defense than attacking your opponent. It focuses on throwing your opponent, or using control holds, arms locks, and choking techniques to subdue him.

However, you do not have to be hulking linebacker to perform the movements, many of the exercises can allow a smaller person to take on a larger one. However, you do have to be in decent physical shape to perform the movements, so if you are not there now the constant training can help you get there.

If you are looking for something to kick up your routine, you might consider Kung Fu. If you have ever seen a movie by or about Bruce Lee then you have seen Kung Fu. While there are many variations and sub-styles, all Kung Fu can be categorized into two categories – hard and soft. Hard Kung Fu focuses on the impressive strikes and kicks. Soft Kung Fu focuses more on

staying grounded and balanced when attacked. Either form may use weapons. Both styles focus your self-defense skills as well as your quickness and agility.

If you are looking for something more combative, karate may be for you. Karate trains focused blows of the hands and feet, as well as special breathing and shouts. Classes are offered from the beginner all the way up to the competitive side of karate, so it is a great choice if you want to exercise as a family.

Tai Chi is another form of martial arts that is rapidly gaining popularity. The goal of Tai Chi is to control your energy, known as "chi". It practices slow, controlled movements that can take anywhere from minutes to an hour to perform. While not the best choice for weight loss, Tai Chi does have its own benefits. It has been shown to improve flexibility and reduce stress, and may even help lower blood pressure and cholesterol. Since it is at a slower pace than other martial arts forms, it is often a good choice for older exercises or those who have mobility problems due to arthritis, illness, or injury.

No matter what martial arts form you try, there are other health benefits to look at – your mental health. In a society plagued with ads and TV shows featuring "perfect" bodies you may be uncomfortable with how you look. Maybe you suffer from depression or low self-esteem. Martial arts classes can help with this. Besides the physical aspect of the classes, martial arts focus on self-confidence, high morale, and respect.

The idea is that if you think you can, you can; and if you think you can't, you can't. Having a positive attitude is a must, and this can flow over into your everyday life. Martial arts reduce stress, and offer a way to literally "punch out" any emotional baggage you may have from the day. As with any exercise, performing martial arts also releases endorphins, the "feel good hormones". This will cause you to feel better in general.

Depending on the class you attend, the teacher may also focus on respect for each other and other life and history and culture of the martial art and how it was developed. Some forms of martial arts are over 1000 years old, so that gives your brain something to chew on while you are working out.

As with any exercise routine, always check with your doctor before beginning. Listen to your body, and stop if you feel weak, have a hard time catching your breath, or become dizzy. And remember to have fun – martial arts should be about punching up your workout routine, not punching the life out of you.

### **Mini-Trampolines – Do They Help or Hurt a Home Exercise Routine?**

Many people have fond memories of jumping on a trampoline as a child-- perhaps even some not-so-fond memories of falling off of one. In recent years, trampolines have been more popular than ever. However, today trampolines are more than just outdoor fun for kids. Mini-trampolines have also become one of the latest trends in home exercise.

But is the mini-trampoline actually an asset to the home exercise routine, or does it do more harm than good?

Unlike a regular trampoline, a mini-trampoline sits about eight inches off the ground and is about 40-50 inches in diameter. This makes them small enough to use indoors, especially since some models fold for easier storage. Their price ranges from about \$50-\$300, depending on quality, which makes them more affordable than many other forms of exercise equipment. Mini-trampolines are much more versatile than they appear at first glance.

You can jump on them normally, or you can do some of the many rebounding exercises that have been developed by various trainers. (Some exercises can even be done while sitting down on the trampoline!) Most of all, they are fun to use, which makes it all the more likely that you will actually use it, and not just let it gather dust in some closet.

The health benefits of mini-trampolines seem to be even more numerous than the practical benefits. Jumping on a mini-trampoline, also known by many today as rebounding, is an aerobic exercise that gets the heart pumping. High impact exercises like jumping help strengthen the bones, which lessens the chance of fractures due to osteoporosis.

However, unlike other high impact exercises, the trampoline mat absorbs much of the downward force, which means you don't put as much stress on your bones and joints as you would with normal running or jumping on harder surfaces. It stimulates the lymphatic system, which depends on movement and deep breathing to flow properly. Mini-trampolines also help you improve your balance, reduce stress, improve blood circulation, and stimulate metabolism and the digestive process. Some people also claim that it helps to clear toxins on a cellular level.

One of the main disadvantages of a mini-trampoline is the risk of falling off. Thousands of people, both children and adults, hurt themselves each year on a trampoline. A recent study by Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, states that injuries occur on mini-trampolines about as often as they do on regular trampolines, though the injuries from mini-trampolines do tend to be less likely to require a hospital visit.

It's usually the lower extremities that are injured, such as a broken leg or sprained ankle, though children under the age of six are more prone to hitting their head. However, a few simple precautions can make a big difference:

- \* Make sure the trampoline's springs are completely covered, so your foot won't get caught in the springs.
- \* Check the legs, springs, canvas, and hinges (if you have a mini-trampoline that folds up) regularly for signs of wear and tear or loose screws.
- \* Place the trampoline on a carpet or non-slip exercise mat rather than the bare floor. Not only will it be easier on your body if you do fall, the trampoline is less likely to move around under your feet than if it were on a hard, smooth surface like tile or linoleum.

\* If you use the mini-trampoline inside, make sure that the ceiling is high enough that you won't hit it while jumping, and stay clear of ceiling fans.

\* Some models, especially those marketed as rebounders, come with a stabilizing bar that you can hold onto while you jump. You might consider getting one of these for added security.

\* And, of course, don't let children jump on it without an adult watching them.

So, it looks like the final verdict on mini-trampolines is a fairly positive one. While care should be taken with them, as with any exercise equipment, the benefits of mini-trampolines can far outweigh the risks. Including it in your home exercise routine can definitely be a fun and effective way to get in shape.

### **Need to Lose Weight? Diet and Exercise Go Hand in Hand**

Americans are obsessed with weight loss. Maybe it is because over half of the population can be considered overweight. Maybe it is all the skinny and gorgeous celebrities we see on the TV. Either way, it seems like every other commercial, radio spot, or magazine advertisements that are for some sort of diet program. There are meal plans, there are pills, or there are shakes. Many people do not realize that diet and exercise must go hand in hand for a successful weight loss program.

The number one key to weight loss is to consume fewer calories than what your body needs a day. Unfortunately, the conception then is that all you have to do to lose weight is to eat less. However, this is not the case. The initial weight loss that you experience is often just water weight. This gives you the false impression that you are making progress with your weight loss. Starting a crash diet puts your body in "starvation mode".

Your body thinks that it is starving, since it is no longer getting the calories and nutrition it needs, so it slows down your metabolism. This means that the number of calories you burn on a given day is less. So even though you are consuming fewer calories, your body is more likely to store the few that you are consuming. This causes a plateau in your weight loss, and can cause the pounds to come back faster once you return to your normal eating practices.

You might even find yourself gaining weight while still on the diet. This often holds true for the many diet pills available on the market. They work for a brief time, but without exercise the body often adjusts. On the other hand, exercise speeds up your metabolism, and the affect lasts long after the workout has completed. So more calories are being burned meaning that you can actually be burning more than you are taking in – diet success!

Another downfall to dieting without exercise is that protein is easier for the body to burn than fat. So it is a simple case of losing it if you are not using it. Muscles are comprised mainly of protein. So instead of eating away at those fat stores, your body starts to digest itself, reabsorbing precious muscle tissue. What is the result?

You feel weak and terrible; yet remain fat. Exercising tells your body that you need those muscles, at which point it is forced to attack the fat stores to get the calories it needs. What is the result of that? Weight loss! Burning away the extra fat also will give you the leaner, toned look you are going for.

The stress of dieting alone can wreak havoc on your system. It can be stressful counting calories or watching what you eat when you normally just grab a candy bar. Your blood sugar may fluctuate. You can become irritable, moody, or even depressed. Exercise helps to boost energy and control stress.

Exercising causes the body to produce endorphins – the “feel good” hormones. These can boost your mood and give you more confidence. The better your attitude, the more like you are to succeed. Plus, people who exercise can eat more and still lose weight. The important thing to do is to make healthy eating choices, not necessarily eat less.

Exercise has been directly linked to lowering high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and even helping to prevent diabetes and other diseases. Dieting, however, can cause a myriad of problems, particularly if the person is inclined to try crash diet after crash diet. Risk of deficiency diseases increases as you may be cutting out essential vitamins and minerals as you cut out food.

You can end up with serious damage to your heart, liver, or kidneys. Long term crash dieting can also turn into dangerous eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia. Any of these risks could land you in the hospital needing long-term care.

Remembering to partner exercise and diet will allow you to have the most successful weight loss program possible. Remember to always speak with your doctor before starting any weight loss or exercise program. Exercise often and make healthy eating choices and you will be well on your way to a leaner, sexier you!

### **Park It –Take Advantage of Your Neighborhood Park for Exercise**

You have decided it is time to get serious about your workout routine, and this time you mean it! Perhaps it is the dawn of a new year that has inspired you to take this step, or maybe that last pair of comfy jeans is beginning to get too snug around the waistline to be worn for much longer. Whatever the reason might be, you are ready to go and make the most of the exercise opportunities that exist in your neighborhood.

At this point you could of course join a gym, but this would tie you to the business hours of the facility, and depending on how busy the gym in your area is, you might not be able to actually do the exercises you enjoy most since they also appear to be popular with everyone else. Your option is to exercise at home.

Perhaps you will purchase some fitness equipment for your bedroom, yet if you do, keep in mind that a lot of these gadgets will eventually either be outgrown by their owners, or they will turn into oversized clothes hangers when their novelty has worn off.

As a matter of fact, there is another alternative for those who wish to exercise away from other people's sweat at the gym, yet without spending a small kingdom's ransom on expensive machines: the local park! Yes, it is true; the local neighborhood park is quite advantageous when it comes to exercise. Here are some ideas and suggestions to help you make the most of that little green belt near your home.

The park is almost always open. Usually from the crack of dawn until nightfall, the park is open and will permit you access. Take advantage of these hours and schedule a trip down to the park together with all the other appointments you have on your calendar. Remember, if you do not make the time for it on paper, odds are it will not happen.

Most parks offer well maintained walking areas. If your fitness regimen includes walking, go ahead and make good use of the walkways. Explore the park and see where the different paths will lead. Do not be afraid to walk too far, since usually the paths will circle back at some point to the main portion.

Many parks offer bicycle tracks. Sometimes the pedestrian walkway and the bicycle paths are simply the same path separated by a line. Vary your exercise regimen by taking out your bike on some of your exercise days.

Many times local parks will have exercise stations for those who will run or jog alongside the path. Take a look at the placards that are displayed at those stations. They offer different kinds of exercises that can be done at those points and even have equipment, such as bars, installed to help you get the most out of your jog.

In a few parks you will have lakes of varying sizes. At some of those lakes you will be able to rent a rowboat. Why work on a rowing machine if you can have the real thing? Go ahead and rent a boat for a half hour and row around the lake. Enjoy yourself and get some exercise in the process.

You can vary your workouts by bringing along dumbbells, which are very portable, and which will permit you to add a new dimension to your walk or jog along the way.

If you are a kettlebell aficionado, you can find a secluded spot in the park to do your exercises without having to worry about the confining walls of your home.

As you can see, the neighborhood park is a treasure trove of exercise possibilities. There is no gym that is as spacious as a park, and no amount of air conditioning can make up for the feeling of sunshine on your face and fresh air in your nostrils. So go ahead, get out of your house, and head on down to the park. The possibilities for a great time of exercise are nearly endless, and the peripheral benefits of fresh air and sunshine are not to be forgotten either.

## **Row Your Way to Weight Loss – Benefits of a Rowing Machine**

With the variety of exercise equipment out there, you may find it hard to decide what to purchase for your home gym. One contender may be a rowing machine, as they offer many benefits for those creating an exercise regime. Here are some of the benefits of rowing machines.

Rowing machines help to exercise all of the major muscle groups. These include your legs, arms, abdominals, and even your back. There are very few aerobic exercises that can strengthen your back, and rowing is one of them. When performed correctly, your legs provide most of the strength needed for the stroke. Your upper body finishes off the movement.

Rowing machines cause a different range of motion than other machines, which can help improve and maintain flexibility of the joints. The wider movement can also give the rower more of a sense of working out than the smaller movements used on other equipment, leading to more satisfaction with their workout.

Since rowing provides both aerobic and strength conditioning, it is perfect for combining with other workouts or using on down days. It can be used to help tone your muscles. If you do not have the time for an extended workout, it can be helpful to have the ability to do both activities at once. If you are low on space in your home gym, it may be a compromise between two other pieces of equipment.

Because it does incorporate aerobic exercise, rowing can be a great calorie burner. Since you are using your entire body at once, it feels like you are doing less work. This makes it easier to burn more calories than riding a bike or jogging for the same amount of time.

Once the movement of a rowing machine has been mastered, the equipment can be used by people of any ages. Since it is fun, it may be a good way for your kids to get some exercise, though they should always be supervised to avoid injury. Since it is low impact, even the elderly or those with joint problems can use the machine. Always check with a doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

Rowing is smooth and impact free, which makes it ideal for those with joint pain or limited mobility. It can also make it more comfortable than higher impact activities like walking or jogging.

A good rowing machine will perfectly mimic the motion of rowing on a boat. So if you choose to, the switch back and forth should be easy. This is great if you decide to take your exercise outdoors during nicer weather and have access to a boat and a lake. Or conversely, if you row for a team, a rowing machine can help you keep your training up even in inclement weather.

Rowing is not without risks though. Some people never become comfortable with the technique for the machine, or never are shown how to properly use it. Improper use can lead to injury, particularly of the back. Go to a gym and try out the machine before buying, and always make sure you are comfortable with the use of the machine before trying at home. Whenever possible, try and get an experienced person to show you the proper technique. As with any

other exercise, you should always consult your doctor before trying something new to prevent injury.

When shopping for a rowing machine, make sure that you go for one that focus on rowing. Other machines that multitask and can be used as other equipment lose some of the true feeling and smoothness of motion. Check the seat and make sure that it moves smoothly and feels comfortable.

The seat should support your lower back and be able to be adjusted to accommodate your height. You should be able to understand and operate the controls on the machine. The machine should operate smoothly and quietly. It should feel solid and sturdy and should not squeak or drag. You might also want to check the warranty to ensure that it covers all parts, including the electronic controls.

When used properly with good equipment, a rowing machine can be a wonderful addition to your home gym. It can offer a great workout that combines fun with actual exercise.

### **Stair Climber and Gliders – What These Do for Your Workout Routines**

There are a lot of different types of home exercise equipment for you to choose from these days. Among them are a couple of more recent additions, stair climbers and gliders. While they are very different from each other, they can both add a new dimension to your workout routine.

The notion of stair climbing itself is not new. Many of you probably have memories of a high school or college coach making you run endlessly up and down the bleachers during gym class. Now, with stair climber machines designed to make you step up the way you would on stairs, you can get the same sort of workout while staying in one place.

Stair climbing not only provides an aerobic workout, but also helps to tone the muscles in your calves, thighs and buttocks. With most stair climbers, you can adjust the stepping rate speed and resistance, which gives you control over the intensity of your workout.

(It's generally considered a good idea to start at a lower step rate, work your way up to a higher rate that will elevate your heart rate to a level within your target heart zone, alternating between a slower, deeper step and a quicker, shallower step; then gradually slow down again at the end out your workout.) You can also read, watch TV, or listen to music while you exercise on the stair climber.

One of the disadvantages of stair climbing is the possibility of hyperextension injuries to the knee if it is overextended. You should also be careful not to place too much weight on the arm supports, as it puts strain on your wrists and reduces the effectiveness of the cardio side of things. Remember to stand straight, since leaning forward while stair climbing can put undue strain on your lower back. Also, if you have cardiovascular or orthopedic problems you should check with your doctor before using a stair climber.

Different types of stair climbers include cylinder-driven, wind-driven, and computer-controlled models. Any of these different stair climbers may include many other options, such as programs that simulate hill or mountain climbing, or monitors that calculate your heart rate, calories burned, or total steps climbed. Like most of the larger exercise equipment, prices range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on quality, brand name, and what options you choose to have included.

Stair climbers target your legs and cardiovascular system, so it would probably be best for you to combine stair climbing with other exercises that focused on your upper body and strength training, like weight lifting, with, of course, some stretching before and after.

Unlike the larger stair climber machines, gliders, also called gliding discs, are just small plastic discs, about the size of a paper plate, which you place under your hands or feet for an added dynamic to any regular workout.

Gliding discs help you work out your entire body by engaging multiple muscle groups while balancing your body using your core, and can add grace and smoothness to your regular movements. Along with variations on basic exercises like lunges, squats, and pushups, many exercises and routines have been designed with gliders specifically in mind.

Gliders tend to cost around twenty or thirty dollars, and often are sold as part of a set, complete with workout videos. It is possible to substitute paper plates or Frisbees, but you need to be very careful that they don't suddenly slip away from you.

This is something of a danger with gliding discs as well, but not as much, since they are designed to glide smoothly over both carpet and hard floor. Still, it is a good idea to be careful until you are accustomed to using gliders, and don't be afraid to hold onto a chair or bar for balance if you need to.

Since gliders focus on slow, graceful movements, and are generally integrated into exercises that concentrate on strength and flexibility, you should combine or alternate them with an aerobic exercise, such as jogging, jumping jacks, or, well, stair climbing.

Stair climbers and gliders are two very different kinds of exercise. However, either one or both of them can be integrated into almost any exercise routine for a more complete workout.

### **The Basics on the Proper Use of a Treadmill**

Treadmills can offer a great workout when used properly. You can use them indoors and get your walking or jogging in without having to worry about the weather. Using your treadmill properly will help you get the best and safest workout possible.

Before you even begin, make sure that you know your machine. Understand how the functions work as well as any monitors. This may require a consultation with your owner's manual, but will be helpful later on if you do not understand how something is working

Next, get comfortable on your treadmill. Remember that it is not going to be exactly like walking out on the sidewalk. You might feel a little dizzy or disoriented when stepping down off the treadmill after a workout, so make sure to hold onto something to get your bearings. Never work out so long that you get dizzy or lightheaded while running or walking.

If you are new to treadmill workouts, it is acceptable to hold on to the handrails if you need to for balance until you get comfortable. Keep in mind though that this will prevent you from burning the maximum amount of calories and making the most of your workout. As you become comfortable on the machine, let your arms swing at your sides like they do when you walk or run outside. You may have to use your machine at a lower setting than your normal speed until you get the hang of it.

Always keep in mind where you are on the belt. If you get too close to the front you could trip, and if you get too close to the back you could slide off. Keep looking straight ahead to avoid stepping off of one side or the other. The greatest danger from treadmills is being thrown from one, so use caution at all times.

Do not look over your shoulder or bend over to pick up an object until the belt has come to a complete stop. Know how to work your treadmill properly to avoid injury. Always start the belt running while your feet are on the side panels – not while they are on the belt itself. Step down onto the belt once you are sure that it is moving. Know how the emergency stop button works and use it if you feel yourself getting pulled backward at any time during the workout. Practice speeding up, slowing down and using the incline until you are comfortable enough with the functions to do a workout.

Always wear a good pair of running or walking shoes when on a treadmill, and never run barefoot. If you have to leave the machine for any reason, make sure that it is turned off before you step away to avoid injury to children or pets.

Many of the new control panels offer displays that give you how far you have gone, your current heart rate, and how many calories that you have burned. These are great if you need a little motivation, but should not be held as gospel truth when doing your workout.

Avoid cheating during your workout for the best caloric burn. Cheating is when you are holding on to the handrails to allow yourself to go at a faster speed or a steeper incline. However, this greatly decreased the amount of calories burned and will cause the readout to be inaccurate.

If your machine asks for your weight to calculate how many calories you are burning, do not fib. The more accurate your weight is the more accurate the information. However, the calculations may still be off as the machine does not know how much of the weight is fat and how much is lean muscle.

If you are leaner, the calories burned will be higher, while if you have a higher fat percentage, the calories burned will be lower. If you ever have questions about the use of your machine, consult the owner's manual or the place of purchase (if bought new). Knowing how to use your treadmill properly and safely will allow you the best and most effective workout and help you reach your training goals.

With proper usage, your treadmill can become a safe, effective, and fun addition to your home exercise program.

## **The Ins and Outs of Rebounding Exercise**

A kid on a trampoline may just be jumping, but these days, an adult on a mini-trampoline is probably "rebounding". Rebounding has become one of the latest trends in home exercise routines. It can be performed by people of all ages, at many levels of health, and can benefit your health in many ways, as well as being fun to do.

Rebounding is a form of exercise performed on mini-trampolines, also called rebounders, which are usually about 8 inches high and 40-50 inches in diameter. This size makes it easy to use and store inside. Some models fold for easier storage, and some rebounders even come with a stabilizing bar that you can hold on to for added balance.

Rebounders are less expensive than many other types of exercise equipment, ranging in price from around \$50 to \$300 or more, depending on style, quality, brand name, and whether it comes as part of a set, complete with instructional videos and other accessories.

In rebounding, instead of just casually jumping, you can follow a routine of specialized bounces and exercises. A typical home routine may start with a minute or two of warm-up bouncing, in which you bounce gently up and down without your feet actually leaving the surface of the rebounder.

Then you would move on to some larger jumps to build up your strength, and continue with some variations to your bouncing, such as kicking, jogging in place, or crossing your arms and legs, to emphasize the aerobic portion of the workout, or perhaps bouncing from side to side to help develop your sense of balance.

You could also bounce on the rebounder from a sitting position, whether for added variety or if you have trouble standing. Different trainers and exercise videos have their own systems with their own variations on these basic moves, along with many other exercises designed specifically for rebounding.

The health benefits of rebounding seem to be almost countless. Rebounding is an aerobic exercise that gets the heart pumping. High impact exercises like jumping help strengthen the bones, which lessens the chance of fractures due to osteoporosis. However, unlike other high impact exercises, the trampoline mat absorbs much of the downward force, which means you don't put as much stress on your bones and joints as you would with normal running or jumping on harder surfaces.

It stimulates the lymphatic system, which depends on movement and deep breathing to flow properly. Rebounding also helps you improve your balance, reduce stress, improve blood circulation, stimulate metabolism and the digestive process, and perhaps even helps to clear toxins on a cellular level.

Now, you do want to be careful on a rebounder. You're up in the air much of the time, which means there is a risk of losing your balance and falling off or landing poorly. However, some basic precautions can keep that danger and other potential difficulties to a minimum:

- \* Wear comfortable clothing and shoes that will support your body as you jump, and that won't tear up the canvas of the trampoline mat.
- \* Make sure the rebounder's springs are completely covered, so your foot won't get caught in the springs.
- \* Check the legs, springs, canvas, and hinges (if you have a rebounder that folds up) regularly for signs of wear and tear or loose screws.
- \* Place the rebounder on a carpet or non-slip exercise mat rather than the bare floor. Not only will it be easier on your body if you happen to fall, the rebounder is less likely to move around under your feet than if it were on a hard, smooth surface like tile or linoleum.
- \* If you use the rebounder indoors, make sure that the ceiling is high enough that you won't hit it while jumping, and stay clear of fans and other ceiling fixtures.
- \* If you have a model that comes with a stabilizing bar, remember that the bar is meant to help you keep your balance, not to hold your weight when you get tired.
- \* You should always drink plenty of water while working out, but you should use the restroom before you begin exercising... just in case.

Rebounding seems to be a great way to keep in shape. In fact, you might say, or even remark that rebounding is really rewarding!

## **The Most Beneficial Equipment for Your Cardio Workout**

Whether you want to lose weight or just stay in shape, cardiovascular workouts can help you do both. No matter what your workout level, having some basic equipment at home can make your workouts more effective and more enjoyable. Here are some of the top items to consider adding to your collection.

A treadmill is one of the most popular pieces of workout equipment. You can use them for walking or jogging. They come with a variety of features to help you tailor your walk to your desired level. Look for a treadmill that has a smooth, steady pace to it, a belt that is sufficiently large enough to accommodate your full stride, and incline settings. Most will also come with heart rate monitors so that you can monitor your progress while you are working out.

Another favorite piece of equipment is a stationary or "exercise" bike. Perfect for all skill levels from beginner to expert, they offer a great non-impact workout that is easier on the joints. They focus mainly on the lower body for the workout. Look for a bike that has smooth, quiet operation and adequate resistance for your workout needs.

Elliptical trainers are almost like a combination of treadmills and bikes, with a horizontally oval movement that is fun and easy to do. They can be adjusted for a more intense workout for seasoned trainers, or kept low for someone just starting out. The movement can take a little getting used to, so you might want to try the equipment out at a health club or gym before making your final purchase.

Step machines are another good lower body workout machines. The movement is similar to running up a never-ending flight of stairs, but without the impact. Resistance can be adjusted for a more intense workout. Step machines do tend to be on the pricier side, so they might be a better addition for later on when you are sure that your in-home workout is going to continue.

For the more advanced exerciser, rowing machines offer a good whole body workout. Similar to rowing a canoe, you can get more of an upper body workout with a rowing machine than with some of the other equipment. However, it is essential to use a rowing machine correctly, as improper use can lead to back strain.

Another more advanced piece of equipment is a cross-country ski machine. It offers a great full body workout and is good for getting your heart rate up and building endurance. It can however, be difficult to master the technique if you are new to the machine. You might consider practicing on one at a gym to master the technique before considering adding it to your home collection.

For a more balanced workout, or to add some difficulty to your current one, consider adding some resistance equipment. This can include something as major as an entire home gym, or something as minor as some basic free weights. Home gyms are a big and expensive purchase, so they might be best left to the more advanced trainer.

Resistance bands or free weights can add some punch to your workout, and cost much less to own and take up less room. If you do decide to go with a home gym, remember that in this case you do get what you pay for, so be prepared to shell out big bucks for a good piece of equipment.

Another thing that you might want to consider adding to your collection is some equipment that can make your cardiovascular workout fun. Consider balance balls or jump ropes to add variety and fun to your workout. Balance balls work wonders to improve your core strength, agility, and coordination, while jump roping is a fun way to get your heart rate up. Not to mention they are items that can make exercise a family affair.

Lastly, you will want to consider anything that will make your workout more comfortable and encourage you to complete it. Some people find that working out to music helps get them pumped up, so a small stereo or you iPod and a collection of energizing music might help. Others enjoy getting their cardiovascular workout from specially designed videos, so a spot for the TV and VCR are essential. If your floor is hard, you might also consider getting some mats for working out on.

With the right equipment, you can be on your way to a great cardiovascular workout in your own home.

## **The Nuances of a Nordic Track**

Nordic Track started out over 20 years ago in the fitness industry with their skier. If you want to get into shape with a reliable company with lots of different products, the Nordic Track is the way to go. A treadmill is a great way to loose weight, and Nordic Track has a lot of different treadmills to choose from. If you're in the market for purchasing one, and you haven't considered Nordic, then take a few minutes and learn why they are the best when buying a treadmill.

Over the years Nordic Track treadmills have been updated and improved. So if you know of someone that wasn't happy with theirs in the past, you can rest assured they've been improved. Also, they company belongs to ICON which is one of the top rated companies that produce a lot of other brands of fitness equipment like Proform.

Of course Nordic offers other prices of exercise equipment that are in the low range, a thousand dollars and under, to the upscale of a few thousand, or more for their equipment. The affordability of one just depends on your pocketbook or wallet. You can always start out on one that doesn't have all of the bell and whistles and move up to what you want. So don't be intimidated or discouraged on price.

The construction of Nordic treadmills as compared to other companies is seen in their extra goodies in the upper and mid priced machines. One of the best features is that their treadmills are iFit compatible. You can join iFit and get a lot of good things from it to keep you in shape. It's a virtual personal trainer at the tip of your finger from your home computer.

Programs for weight training can be downloaded for you to put into practice and a weekly practice report will go straight to your email address. Also, because Nordic treadmills are compatible with iFit, you can get a personalized meal planner and nutrition guideline to follow to help you loose weight. It also tracks cardio info, and your age too.

Another noticeable difference between Nordic and other fitness equipment companies is that you'll be able to stay cool. There aren't any cheap fans that burn out, or won't put out enough power to keep you cool because a CoolAire fan is on the units. A good feature too is that you can set the treadmill to your desired workout routine, or use any of the pre-programmed exercises based on your health stats that you put into the treadmills computer.

Not only do you have a profile set up just for you, but in it you'll be able to track how many miles you been in one day, one week, or even one month. There is a carbohydrate counter that can let you know how many fats you've burned, and the optimum calories that you need to burn, to reach your weigh loss goals.

A not so subtle difference exists in the deck and mat of the Nordic treadmill systems too. Some treadmills of Nordic don't offer this option, so make sure to look into getting it, if you can afford it. Its benefit is that your jog, walk or full run will be cushioned so your joints and muscles won't be damaged. It's a nice cushioned ride, but the design allows for the energy to be transferred back so you can stride easily on the treadmill.

The warranty is nothing to be discounted, and it's a benefit that a lot of other treadmills don't have either. Warranties that are standard for Nordic Track will cover the motor for up to 3 years, and your frame and other moving parts for two. You won't have to pay for any labor for one year. Some models now have a warranty for the motor for a lifetime.

As you can see Nordic Track does make a difference in their machines as compared with others. Check out all that the company has to offer, and ask around from other Nordic users in person, to see what they like about their treadmills. You can always get a great deal from the on sale treadmills at their website and at the same time know the Nordic company does make quality differences in their exercise equipment.

### **Why Treadmills Are so Versatile and Fit Any Lifestyle**

Treadmills have been an integral part of home and gym exercise for decades, and they have remained one of the most popular pieces of equipment to be included in home gyms. In a culture inundated with fads and latest trends, what gives the treadmill such staying power? The answer is literally simple. The treadmill is so simple and versatile that it can fit easily into anyone's lifestyle.

While other exercise machines sometimes intimidate beginners with their heavy weights or complicated-looking gears and levers, there's nothing very intimidating about a treadmill; you just walk, something most of us have been doing our whole lives. Yet it only takes a few adjustments to speed and incline to give us a wide range of intensity from just one machine.

Walking is a very beneficial form of exercise for pregnant women and people with certain health conditions, such as osteoporosis, hypertension, and back pain-- people for whom other types of exercise might be too risky.

Even if you're relatively healthy, walking or jogging can strengthen joints and improve muscle tone all over the body, which makes your heart stronger, and, of course, can help you lose weight. According to a study in the Journal of the American Medical Association, a medium-intensity treadmill workout burns about 700 calories per hour, more than an exercise bike, rowing machine, or cross-country skiing machine.

Unlike regular walking or jogging, treadmills will keep you going at a steady pace of your choice, whether that pace is a relaxed walk or a challenging jog, so you don't have to worry about inadvertently slowing down and reducing the effectiveness of your workout. The ability of many treadmills to adjust their incline to simulate uphill climbs adds even more opportunities for a challenging workout.

With a treadmill, you don't have to worry about bad weather, and you always have a smooth walking or running surface. You can watch TV, read a book, listen to music, or just look out a window with a nice view while you're on the treadmill, and many models fold for easier storage when not in use.

There are a wide variety of treadmills to choose from on the market today, ranging from simple, manpowered treadmills that require no electricity, to state-of-the-art digital wonders with twenty different workout programs, monitors that show your speed and calculate your heart rate, and built-in fans and TV screens. While all these extras are great, here are some of the factors that you should consider first when you look for a new treadmill:

- \* Look for a reliable motor. Make sure the motor is rated "Continuous Duty" rather than "Peak Duty". "Peak Duty" is misleading and refers to how high it can perform before breaking down, rather than it's ideal performance rate. Larger motors will also tend to last longer and give you a smoother performance.

- \* Make sure the base of the treadmill is sturdy, and that the parts are made of durable material. You don't want to be walking on something that feels like it's about to fall apart. Try out the treadmills before making your decision, so you can feel for yourself how comfortable they are under your feet.

- \* Check how long the warranty lasts, if there is one, and how extensive its coverage is. A good warranty can give you a lot of peace of mind.

- \* Decide where you're going to put the treadmill in your home, and whether it can stay in that spot all the time, or will have to be moved every time you exercise. While many treadmills fold for easier storage, some can be moved more easily than others.

- \* See if the treadmill has any safety features, such as an automatic shut-off if something gets stuck in the belt.

- \* Consider what kind of range of speed and incline will best fit your workout.

- \* Think about whether or not you will actually use all those extra programs and features. Remember, a treadmill's main purpose is for walking and not for watching TV, and extras like fans or cup holders can be bought separately if necessary.

Treadmills are a great form of exercise, whether you have been working out for years or are just beginning. Give them a try!

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