

# Cross Training

If the thought of doing the same old exercises every day keeps you from starting an exercise program, cross training may be the answer. Cross training simply means that you include a variety of activities in your fitness program. For example, you could alternate jogging and swimming during the week, and play a game of tennis on the weekend. All three are aerobic activities and use similar muscles, but in different ways.

Cross training began to build in popularity during the 1980s. Now, with increasing numbers of multi-sport events such as triathlons, it is a common training technique. Cross training is an ideal way to develop a "balanced" fitness program and has several benefits, whether you are a serious athlete or just someone interested in becoming more fit and active. Cross training can provide a "total body tune-up," something you won't get if you concentrate on just one type of activity. Including a variety of activities in your fitness program will help prevent boredom. That can help you stick to the program. Exercising various muscle groups may help your muscles adapt more easily to new activities. Because you won't be using the same muscles in the same way all the time, you may experience fewer overuse injuries. If you do become injured, you usually won't have to give up your entire fitness program. You may be able to modify or substitute activities, based on your physician's suggestions.

## How to cross train

A general fitness program has three components:

1. Aerobic exercises (stair climbing, walking, skating) improve cardiovascular capabilities.
2. Strength training (weight lifting, push-ups) helps develop muscle mass.
3. Flexibility exercises (stretches, yoga) help keep muscles limber.

With cross training, you can easily incorporate all three components in your fitness routine. First, talk to your physician and make sure that it's safe for you to begin a program. Some activities are not appropriate for people with certain physical limitations.

Then consider what kinds of activities are readily available to you. Select activities that are convenient and enjoyable. You should be doing at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days. You can break your exercise routine into shorter periods, as long as it adds up over the course of the day. Remember that physical activity isn't limited to sports like jogging or weight lifting. Dancing, gardening, and housework count too.

## A sample program

A balanced weekly cross training program might look like this:

1. Three times a week: 30 minutes of aerobic exercises, alternating activities such as walking, swimming and stair climbing.
2. Twice a week (not consecutive days): 30 minutes of strength training, working each major muscle group.
3. Every day: 5 to 10 minutes of stretching. It's also safe to walk every day.

Start slowly and gradually increase the duration and intensity of your exercises. Try to follow the "10 percent rule"-increase the frequency, duration, or intensity of an activity by no more than 10% each week.

You may not see results overnight, but cross-training will have a beneficial effect on your health and fitness level. Regular physical activity increases your chances for a longer, healthier, and more independent life. Keep at it!

February 2002

More Information Provided by AAOS

## Check out these websites for more information on Cross Training:

- ⚙ **Calculates Calories Burned for 222 Exercises:**  
<http://primusweb.com/fitnesspartner/jumpsite/calculat.htm>
- ⚙ **Calculates Calories Burned for a Variety of Exercises**  
<http://www.healthstatus.com/calculate/cbc>
- ⚙ **Examples of Cardio Exercises That Burn Calories:**  
<http://www.shapefit.com/cardio-exercises.html>
- ⚙ **Eight Benefits of Cross Training:**  
<http://www.runnersworld.com/article/0,7120,s6-238-263-266-7420-0,00.html>