

# Cross-Training—Reviving Your Fitness Program

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Maybe you love to exercise and want to do more, but fear that stepping up your workout routine will put you on the injured list. Or perhaps you've been pedaling your way to fitness on a stationary bike, but boredom has put the brakes on your enthusiasm. These are common problems that don't necessarily have to limit your fitness goals. In fact, the solution might be a simple one: cross-training.



## What is Cross-Training?

Cross training is incorporating two or more activities into a fitness program. A typical cross-training program might include running, swimming, and biking on separate days of the week. The goal being to achieve balance, avoid injury, and avoid the monotony that comes from the same exercise day after day.

Consider the benefits:

- **Motivation**—If you jog the same path and the same distance everyday, you could be running the risk of burnout. When that happens, people tend to quit exercising altogether. If your enthusiasm for exercise has dimmed, perhaps you need something to fire you up.



- **Reduced risk of injury**—Because cross training distributes stress across different joints and muscle groups, the risk of injury is less. Muscles have a chance to recover and those already injured can heal while your heart and lungs stay in shape.
- **Longer exercise periods**—Have you noticed that near the end of a workout, your muscles become fatigued? By rotating to an exercise that uses different muscles, it is possible to continue exercise when one muscle group tires.

## Components of Fitness

There are three basic components of fitness:

- **Flexibility**-- Flexibility means joints are able to move freely and gracefully through their full range of motion.
- **Strength**-- Strength describes a muscle's ability to perform. You build muscle capacity by moving the body against resistance while the muscles contract.
- **Cardiovascular endurance**. Cardiovascular endurance is the ability of the heart, lungs, and circulatory system to supply oxygen and nutrients efficiently to working muscles. Aerobic exercises that work the large muscles of the legs and trunk are best for building such endurance. You need a minimum of 20 minutes continuous aerobic exercises to get benefit.

## Incorporating Cross-Training

A good cross-training program includes exercises that work the entire body. Swimming combines nicely with running or cycling, for example. Aerobic dancing provides a solid cardiovascular workout while working the upper and lower body.



For flexibility, stretching should be a part of your routine before and after any workout. For increased focus on flexibility, think about a stretching or yoga class. Don't count out recreational activities such as basketball, tennis, or golf. Although they may not give you a proper aerobic workout, they help work arms and legs and burn calories.

Plan a well-rounded program that emphasizes different areas of the body on alternating days. Write down your plan and record your workout results. It will give you a sense of accomplishment and help keep you on the right track. Cross training will help you stay in shape, stay motivated, and stay free of injuries. It could be the answer to your exercise needs.

