

How Do I Get My Cardio Done?

If you've committed to increasing your fitness level, that means that you need to add cardio to your exercise mix. But joining a gym and attending classes isn't always the answer. Cost, location, and class times may not work with your life. So how can you get your cardio done without a lot of expense and working with your own schedule? Here are a few suggestions, with possible pros and cons for each choice.

Check out your local community centres. They offer a variety of classes and times, for a set number of weeks. There are three or four "seasons", with breaks between seasons. The cost of these programs is moderate. Also look into public swims at city-run pools, adult court sports such as volleyball, basketball or soccer leagues.

Pros: good cost, certified instructors, program variety

Cons: breaks of up to a month between seasons may leave you floundering

Walking indoors. In poor weather, you may be able to go to a large mall. Often these malls open the doors early to accommodate the walking groups. You can get a brisk pace walking through the mall and elevate your heart rate for a good length of time.

Pros: Weather is not an issue, if you don't enjoy getting cold, wet or muddy.

Cons: You may be tempted by the store displays! This may keep you from sustaining an elevated heart rate and getting the results you want.

Walking outdoors. If you enjoy your neighbourhood, strap on your walking shoes and get out there! Each area of your city or town will offer different challenges such as hills, trails, rougher terrain, or easy flat sidewalks – choose your level.

Pros: You get the stimulation of constantly changing scenery and fresh air

Cons: Weather issues. Also, know your geography (or take a map with you).

At-home cardio machines. These offer consistent cardio and can be an important tool for your fitness.

Pros: Most treadmills, ellipticals, stationary bikes and so forth have programs to choose from to avoid training the same way all the time. That's a good plus for you.

Cons: Boredom. Often these machines become laundry racks or dust collectors! So my advice would be to position it in front of a TV/DVD combo and make sure you have something interesting and upbeat to watch.

Outdoor activities such as cycling, running, skiing or snow-shoeing

Pros: good cardio opportunity, stimulus of changing scenery, low cost

Cons: Weather issues. Again, know where you are going – and take a cell phone with you in case you run into problems and are alone.

Cardio DVDs. There is an infinite variety out there! If you have a good space in your home in front of the TV/DVD unit, consider this as part of your cardio choices. Check out the website www.collagevideo.com - they sell all kinds of exercise DVDs, and there is a description, rating and cost listed for each. Your local library may also be a good source of exercise DVDs, and at no cost to library patrons.

Pros: good cardio choice – just make sure that the description sounds like you. If you are just beginning to get fit, phrases like “intense fat-burning” and ultimate

bootcamp challenge” should cue you to look at other DVDs. Likewise, if you have two left feet, don’t pick DVDs that talk about salsa, hip hop, or samba dance moves.

Cons: After a while, it gets old. So you need to get several DVDs and rotate through them to avoid boring repetition. Also, make sure the DVD doesn’t require you to buy a lot of equipment unless you want to. You can also sell them later to a local used bookstore if you want (and buy new ones!)

So expand your horizons and check out what’s available in your community!

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