

Your Complete Guide to Cardio Machines

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Everyone knows that the secret to great results in the gym is cardio: whether you're looking to lose weight, tone up or achieve a major fitness goal. But it's pretty easy to get complacent in a cardio routine, especially if you're in a gym—the same machine at the same intensity for the same amount of time every day. This has all the makings of minimal results, overused muscles, and of course, *complete* boredom. Your gym routine should be fun, and you want to get something

good out of it!

So it's time to switch up—and step up—your routine. By using each of the four main cardio machines—treadmill, elliptical, stationary bike and rowing machine—in the way that they work best, you'll hit your goals much more quickly (and have a great time doing it)! Here's your complete guide to how to use cardio machines to get the best results ever.

When you're just starting out...

The stationary bike is great for beginners, says **Adam Rosante**, a celebrity trainer and fitness coach for CosmoBody. After all, you can't forget how to ride a bike, right? For those new to working out, monotony can be a huge turn-off. With a stationary bike, you can not only watch TV, but even read while riding. And if you're one to use the I'm-too-busy-to-work-out excuse, this multitasking option officially makes it obsolete.

When you're coming back from injury...

"The stationary bike is easy on the joints and there's no eccentric component—which means it's low resistance," says Rosante, "So you'll have less soreness in the days following your session." The rower and elliptical are also low impact, but can be problematic if you're suffering from any upper body pain.

When you've been sitting all day...

Use anything *but* the stationary bike. "If you spend a significant part of your day sitting at work, the last thing you need is to be seated through your workout," says Rosante.

Because you're sitting, you're also not working as hard—you're at a 10 percent diminished capacity, says **New York Area Board Certified Personal Trainer and Nutritionist Franci Cohen**.

“You’ll need to make up for this with resistance,” she says, or a longer workout. Try the treadmill or elliptical instead.

If you get bored easily...

Try the rower. “Proper rowing technique must be learned in order to provide an efficient and safe workout,” says Cohen. “Just scooting back and forth and yanking the handle won’t cut it.” Learning proper form keeps the mind engaged—and it’s also really fun!

If you only work out a few times a week...

Focus on the rowing machine. “Unlike the other machines, rowers incorporate your whole body for an incredibly effective sweat session,” says Rosante. The others primarily target the leg muscles and require additional strength training.

However, if you adjust the tension of the handles on the elliptical, you can add an arm and upper back workout, says Cohen.

If you need help with motivation...

Stay *away* from the elliptical. “It can be easy to slack off since you control how fast your legs are moving,” says Cohen. “Unlike a treadmill, there is no speed button to keep you accountable and working hard.”

If you seek variety...

Use the treadmill. With the treadmill, “you can change the incline and speed at any time,” says Rosante. “Research shows that varying up your workouts can aid in long term results.” Your muscles essentially adjust to the stress exerted from the exercise and don’t work as hard when you do the same routine over and over. By simply changing the intensity or adding inclines you prevent your muscles from learning habits.

The elliptical can also work the muscles differently. “You have the option to stride both forward and in reverse, so you are maximizing the different muscle groups you’re working, while easing the tension on the hip flexors,” says Rosante.

If you’re type A...

And love to track your pace, mileage and calories burned? The treadmill does it all. You can select one of the many training programs already in the system—it’s just like having your own personal trainer on hand.