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# Wellness Updates

From Healthy Merits



## Strength Training + Cardio = Bigger Benefits

When it comes to working out, what type of exercise do you choose? While it can be comfortable to stick with your go-to exercise option, mixing up disciplines can give you healthier outcomes.

Why? A lot like nutrition, our best workout regimens are ones that are properly balanced. Have you ever asked yourself, “Which should I do? Cardio or strength training?” The answer is surprisingly simple: both!

Each type of exercise has unique benefits. Strength training can make you stronger, increase your flexibility and contribute toward better bone health. It will also help you fight off the loss of muscle mass that happens naturally as we age. Cardio workouts are great for losing weight, keeping your heart healthy, boosting your endurance and more. Including both types of workouts in your regular fitness routine will help you to reap the rewards of each.

### Time to get moving

When life gets busy, you might worry about having enough time to squeeze in proper workouts. How much is enough? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends striving for 150 minutes per week of aerobic-style activity. For strength workouts, they suggest two days per week as a good place to start.

There’s good news! No matter your age, current fitness level or ability, physical activity can help you feel better. It’s been shown to reduce anxiety and help you get better-quality sleep. Being active can also foster growth and development, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and improve your overall health.

To help you learn a bit more about cardio and strength training, we’ve compiled some tips and pointers below. Using these guidelines, you can set fitness goals to fit your needs and your schedule. And you’ll start seeing additional benefits from your workouts in no time!

### How much activity do I need?

 <p><b>Moderate-intensity aerobic activity</b> Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts.</p> <p>at least <b>150</b> minutes a week</p> 	AND	 <p><b>Muscle-strengthening activity</b> Do activities that make your muscles work harder than usual.</p> <p>at least <b>2</b> days a week</p> 
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Tight on time this week? **Start with just 5 minutes.** It all adds up!

## What is cardio activity?

Cardio, or cardiovascular, refers to any activity that increases your heart rate and breathing while using the larger muscle groups in your body. You might also hear it called aerobic activity. Basically, if it's getting your heart pumping, it's probably cardio! You may also recognize cardio or aerobic activities by repetitive movements or rhythmic breathing.

Some examples of cardio exercise include walking, jogging or running, biking, swimming and cross-country skiing. Many fitness classes also fall into this category, as well as using the elliptical or rowing machines, or doing water aerobics. It can even include housework activities, such as vacuuming, painting or gardening.

## How much cardio should I do?

Guidelines suggest you should aim for at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity exercise, which equates to about 30 minutes a day. For more vigorous activities, you can shoot for 75 minutes per week, or just over an hour.

**When you do regular cardio exercise, you'll be helping your heart and lung health. You'll also start to see gains in your overall health. You could notice and feel things like:**

- Increased exercise tolerance.
- Reduction in your body weight.
- Lowered blood pressure.
- Reduction in bad (LDL and total) cholesterol.
- Increases in good (HDL) cholesterol.
- Increased insulin sensitivity.
- Better sleep.
- Regulated weight.
- Boosts to your overall mood.
- A stronger immune system.



Reference: <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/full/10.1161/01.CIR.0000048890.59383.8D>

## Strength training is more than just lifting weights

When we think of trying to get stronger, we might immediately think of lifting weights. And while that can be a big part of it, strength training is defined as any type of conditioning exercise that helps our muscles become stronger and more powerful. You can achieve this by using weights or elastic bands, but it can also be done with body weight training. These are exercises using your own body weight as resistance, like push-ups, squats, lunges, burpees or crunches. Yoga and stretching exercises can also be part of successful strength training programs.

Strength training helps build our muscles, and it also makes for better bone health and flexibility. As we age, this can become more and more important. By working on keeping your body strong, you can ward off sports-related injuries, bone breaks and fractures. You can even reduce your risk of future osteoporosis.

As you build more muscle, your body will also start to burn more calories. So, with extra calorie burn, you can see increases in your metabolism, which helps with weight loss and weight management.

**Looking for ideas on which strength training exercises to attempt, or equipment to try out? Here are some to add to your list:**

- Bodyweight exercises (push-ups, lunges, squats, pull-ups, etc.)
- Circuit training
- Exercise bands
- Free weights and dumbbells
- Gym machines (stair machines, leg press, lat pull-down, etc.)
- Group classes (HIIT, yoga, bootcamp style, body training, etc.)



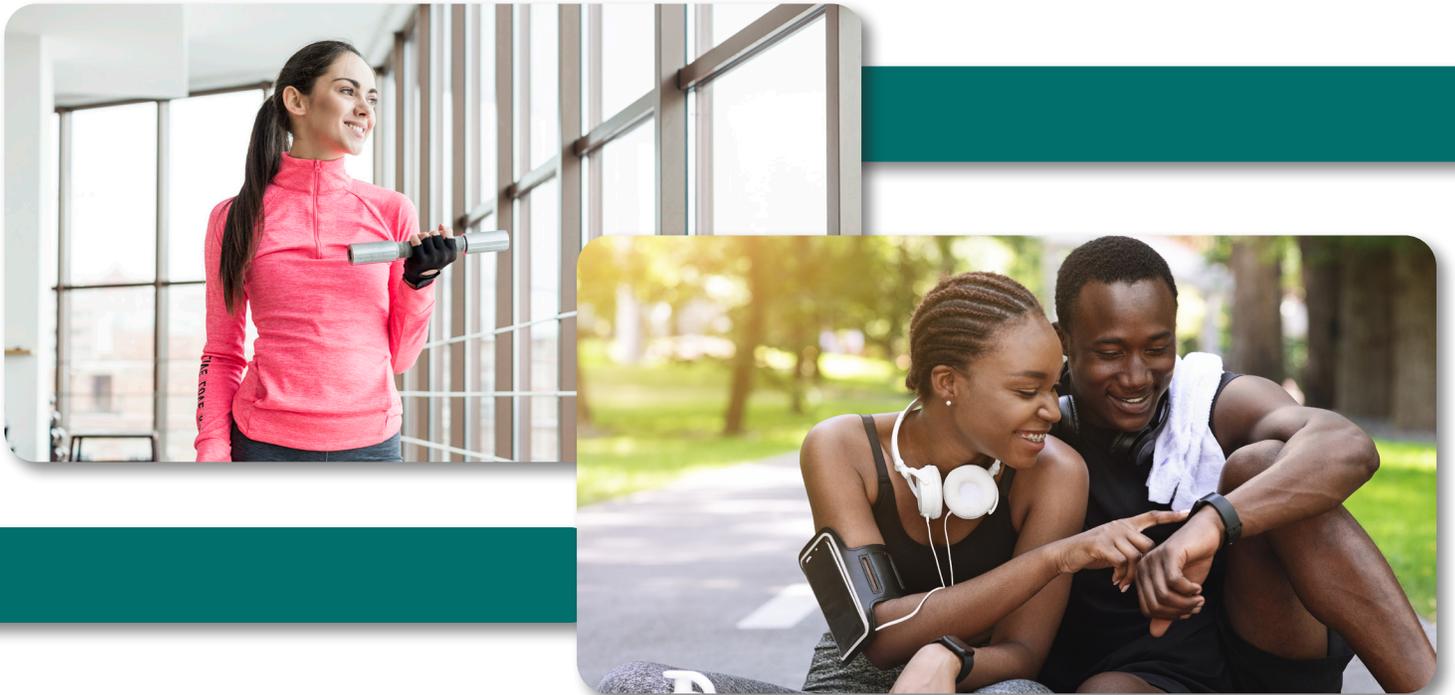
Reference: <https://www.wholelifechallenge.com/why-you-need-both-strength-and-cardio/>

## Working out for the long haul

So, the good news is when you're choosing exercises to work into your lifestyle, you don't have to choose between cardio or strength training. You can—and should—do both! And by picking workouts you can stick with, you can enjoy healthy benefits well into the future.

## Wellness challenges

You can go to your company's wellness website through Healthy Merits to find more information on individual topics, such as healthy living, exercise tips and more. You can also find links to fitness topics under the University tab.



## Questions?

We're here to help. For more information, call Healthy Merits Customer Service at **1.877.348.4533** or email **healthymerits@meritain.com**.

*This newsletter is for informational purposes only, and is not meant as medical advice.*