

Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE)

Generally, if you can't talk during exercise, you're training too hard. However, a more accurate method of measuring exercise intensity is the Rating of Perceived Exertion. To put it simply, imagine a scale of 6 to 20 and try to determine where your intensity level is on that scale. That number will be very close to your heart rate. To simplify further, you can narrow the scale down when exercising to a scale of 10 to 18. This would correspond to a heart rate of 100 to 180. It is beneficial to become familiar with this method so that you are always aware of your heart rate when exercising. This allows you to constantly monitor your heart rate and adjust the intensity of your exercise to remain within the target zone. This method should not replace direct heart rate measurement due to inherent inaccuracy but serve as an adjunct to it.

Blood Pressure

Blood pressure readings consist of two numbers, systolic and diastolic pressures. The systolic pressure is a measurement of how forceful the heart is pumping blood when it contracts in the pumping stage. If this reading is too high, then the heart is working too hard. The diastolic pressure is the measurement of the force existing within the relaxed arteries between heartbeats. If this number is high it could be indicative of clogged or constricted blood vessels.

Digital blood pressure monitors are available at many department and drug stores and provide an easy method of taking a reading. When a reading is taken in the doctor's office, he first wraps the cuff around your arm and pumps it up with air effectively cutting off the circulation to the lower arm. As he pumps air into the cuff, a mercury pressure gauge provides an increasing reading of the pressure within the cuff. Listening through a stethoscope, he begins to slowly let the air out and the gauge begins to fall. At the moment he hears the pulse start back up, he records the level on the gauge. This is the systolic pressure. He continues to release air from the cuff. When he can no longer hear your pulse, he records that reading from the gauge. That is your diastolic pressure. A reading of 120/80 or lower is considered good. A reading of 140/90 or above is considered high blood pressure.

It is important to see a doctor to determine if medication is required if high blood pressure is indicated. Exercising with high blood pressure and without medication could cause serious consequences. Exercise raises the heart rate and associated cardiovascular pressures, which can push a borderline reading to excessive levels. Certain foods can elevate blood pressure by constricting blood vessels or increasing heart rate.

The Valsalva Maneuver or holding the breath while performing an exercise can increase blood pressure to extremely high and dangerous levels. Blood pressures of nearly 400/350 have been recorded during such actions. Existing aneurysms can burst, blood vessels in the eye can rupture and even retinas can tear (Valsalva Retinopathy). This is a common and dangerous practice. It is also the job of the

trainer or spotter to recognize when the breath is being held and bring it to the exerciser's attention immediately.

Proper Attire for Specific Activity

Proper attire is just as important as all the other requirements for effective exercise. Running shoes provide the needed heel cushioning but lack in the side to side lateral support for required for aerobics. Aerobic shoes are generally available for women. However, men's aerobic shoes are scarce. A good cross trainer shoe provides all the necessary support for aerobics. Athletic shoes should fit properly. Break in period does not apply to athletic shoes they should fit comfortably from the beginning. Depending on the amount of use they get, insoles may wear out before the shoes show signs of external wear.

It is important to wear clothing that allows the skin to breathe. The body utilizes sweating to regulate temperature. Clothes that restrict the cooling of the skin are not recommended. It's important to wear clothing that allows the body to ventilate. If evaporation does not occur, the wet clothing will continue to help radiate body heat. This can lead to loss of excess body heat after exercise when heat retention is important.

Cotton soaks up sweat readily, but stays wet. Wool, however, continues to provide body warmth even when wet. Nylon doesn't allow water to permeate through. Obviously, layers are important in cold weather environments. Layers allow you to remove and replace outer garments as the need arises. Hats are equally important in cold weather since a considerable amount of body heat can be lost through the head. In warm weather, wear loose clothing that allows sweat evaporation. Again, cotton dries slower than man-made materials. A combination of cotton and polyester combines the absorption and wicking qualities of each material.

Specific Aerobic Activities

Running

- Use a good running shoe.
- Land on the heel and rotate to the toe, except when sprinting stay on toes.
- Use orthotic inserts if necessary.
- Restrict vertical movement, don't slam down, and glide.

Stair Master

- Use the handrails for balance only, not for support.
- Keep back and head straight up in vertical alignment.
- Using 8 to 10 inch step strokes uses 15% more energy.

Stationary Bicycle

- Restrict side flex movement.

- Assume upper body slightly forward with head upright.
- Adjust seat for near full leg extension.

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