

Making Sure It's Aerobic

Although warming up and stretching are vital, the major portion of your exercise program should be devoted to aerobic exercise, activities that make your heart beat more rapidly and your breath come faster. Jogging, jumping rope, fast walking, dancing and swimming all qualify as aerobic exercise if done vigorously and continuously. Strolling at a moderate pace, gliding on a bicycle or slow dancing don't count as aerobic exercise because they aren't vigorous enough to make your heart beat continuously at a higher rate for 30 minutes.

The best exercise advice I can give you is this: find activities that you enjoy and that fit well into your daily schedule. Then you'll be much more likely to exercise on a regular basis. Here are some of the more popular aerobic activities:

- *Brisk walking*—A popular, inexpensive form of exercise. All you need is a good pair of supportive shoes and some loose-fitting clothes appropriate to the season. You can do it just about anywhere, and it puts much less strain on the bones, joints and ligaments than intense running. You can also suit your current level of conditioning by pacing yourself, choosing any speed from strolling to race-walking.
- *Jogging/running*—This is another simple, inexpensive way to get into shape. Remember, however, that too much "pavement pounding" can cause joint troubles. To avoid overstressing the joints, many people jog or run only one or two days a week, then swim or bicycle the other days.
- *Cycling*—This excellent aerobic activity is easy on the joints because you're not pounding your feet on the ground. It also helps tone and strengthen your leg muscles. If you're not the outdoor type, you can bicycle indoors on a stationary bike, reading or watching TV as you pedal away.
- *Swimming*—Swimming uses all of the major muscle groups, and is well suited to people who have joint problems because the water supports the body while simultaneously providing resistance. You can get plenty of exercise without putting wear and tear on your joints.
- *Aerobics*—If you enjoy moving to music, aerobics classes may be for you. You might have to shop around a bit for an appropriate activity level and teaching style, but the effort will be worth it. Make sure you have a good pair of supportive shoes and comfortable clothes. If you have joint problems, look for a "low-impact" class which will limit jumping, pounding and other movements that overload the joints.
- *Cross-country skiing*—Whether you live in snow country or prefer to "ski" on a machine indoors, cross-country skiing is one of the very best overall conditioning exercises. It uses many muscle groups but puts very little stress on your knees because your feet slide rather than pound on the ground.
- *Hiking*—Hiking, particularly uphill, can provide an inexpensive, hefty and exhilarating workout. If you love being out-