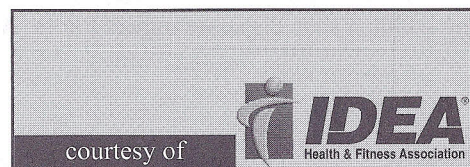


Getting the Most From Cardio Equipment

Whether you exercise frequently on cardiovascular equipment or you are just starting to use it, these tips from Gregory Florez, president of First Fitness Inc. in Salt Lake City, Utah, will help you maximize your workouts. If you have questions, consult with a personal trainer or a staff member at your fitness facility.

- 1. Choose Appropriate Equipment.** If possible, select equipment that provides weight-bearing exercise, as this improves bone health. Your options include a treadmill, an elliptical trainer or a stair climber. However, if you need to perform non-weight-bearing exercise for medical or other reasons, use a stationary bicycle.
- 2. Understand the Equipment.** Make sure that you can access the preset programs (or create your own); control your workout's speed, intensity and duration; and adjust the seat position or incline, if applicable. Before you begin, understand how to stop the equipment in case you need to dismount quickly. Some machines have a "stop" button on the console or a safety switch you attach to your clothes. In other cases, you just stop exercising and the machine slows to a halt.
- 3. Look for Heart Rate Technology.** If possible, use equipment with integrated heart rate technology. Then, when you wear a transmitter on a chest strap, you can monitor your heart rate on the console as you exercise. Examine heart rate charts to find the guidelines for your age.
- 4. Familiarize Yourself With the Programs.** Most pieces of cardiovascular equipment have preset programs to help you meet goals such as losing weight, preparing for a 100-mile bike ride or training for a hill run. Consider how the various programs will best support your goals and recreational activities.
- 5. First Try a Manual or Steady-State Program.** A manual program allows you to continually adjust the intensity, incline and speed of your workout. A steady-state program gives you a warm-up, a cardio workout and a cool-down. Some steady-state programs are preset; others are customizable.
- 6. Advance to an Interval Program.** Most machines have some type of preset interval program that intersperses periods of intensity with periods of recovery. (The program may be called "fat burning" or "weight loss" on some equipment.) The best programs factor in speed, grade, resistance level and heart rate. With these programs, you can enter your target heart rate (THR) and the machine will automatically adjust key variables throughout the workout to keep you in your THR zone.
- 7. Choose a Hill Program for Variety.** A lot of cardiovascular machines provide this type of program, which may be called something like "Pikes Peak" or "Mount Olympus." Often the name is based on a particular race or event ("Uphill 10K Run," for example). If you need a challenge or want something new, a hill program may be the answer.
- 8. Use the Race Pace Program to Prepare for Competition.** This program can motivate you to step up your training and get ready for an athletic event. For example, say you have run three 10K races in the past year and want to reduce your time. If you train on a treadmill using this program, you can select warm-up, cool-down, speed and possibly incline parameters that will help you complete the 10K distance at or near the race pace you want to achieve.
- 9. Seek More Information.** If you exercise at a fitness facility, ask a staff person or personal trainer to provide you with a thorough tutorial on the capabilities of different pieces of equipment. If you exercise at home, visit a specialty retailer and ask a salesperson for hands-on demonstrations. (Be sure to wear workout clothes to the store!)
- 10. Check Manufacturers' Web Sites.** Most manufacturers provide product information, including relevant research reports, online. For example, see Life Fitness (www.lifefitness.com), Precor USA (www.precor.com), Cybex/Trotter (www.cybex.com), Trimline/Hebb Industries (www.hebbindinc.com), PaceMaster (www.pacemaster.com) and Schwinn (www.schwinn.com).



courtesy of