

# GET CREATIVE WITH CARDIO EQUIPMENT WORKOUTS

Computerized programs aren't the only option for a great workout.

By BARB GORMLEY

**H**op on any piece of quality cardio equipment today and you'll find loads of exercise options to choose from. Punch in "hills," "interval" or "cardio," for example, and boom—up flashes a computer-generated program that's designed to get the heart pounding and the thighs burning.

But despite the many choices available, some trainers find the built-in programs don't work for all exercisers. They prefer to custom design their clients' workouts.

## SATISFY BEGINNERS AND THE OVERWEIGHT

As owner of Toronto's Personal Training Plus, Mark Vendramini is looking to create fit and happy clients who spread the

good word about his club and services. He is keen to do whatever he can to make workouts both effective and enjoyable. For his beginner and overweight clients, who have little cardiovascular and muscular endurance, he finds that combining short bouts of cardio with strength training is the most effective strategy. He alternates five-minute intervals on a variety of cardio pieces with weight training exercises.

"I can get them working more intensely during the five-minute bouts than if they were doing 30 or 40 minutes of straight cardio," says Vendramini. Another big bonus is fewer incidents of shin splints and other overuse injuries.

In Pointe Claire, Que., Body Fitness is bursting with baby boomers, and some of them are also beginner exercisers. Al-



### Tap into a high-tech tool

Romeo Rawlins of Body Fitness says the hottest cardio trend at his club is StarTrac's ProPartner. Clients don't always track their cardio as accurately as their weight training, says Rawlins. The StarTrac technology provides the details trainers need to properly assess their clients' programs and progress by saving and tracking data using a Palm Pilot or other personal digital assistant (PDA). The PDA [the client's or club's] is placed in the water bottle holder where it transmits, receives and saves information such as date, elapsed time, distance travelled, calories burned, average heart rate, average speed and average incline. The software can be downloaded at no cost from [www.startrac.com](http://www.startrac.com).

though owner and former personal trainer Romeo Rawlins likes to see his members doing a minimum of 30 minutes of cardio each workout, his beginners simply find it too challenging.

"If you're unconditioned or haven't trained in 10 years, it's hard to stay on the machine for more than a few minutes," says Rawlins.

His solution is to break the workout into smaller chunks that are psychologically more manageable and less intimidat-



### Ditch the magazines

Reading during cardio workouts usually slows the pace and encourages poor posture, says personal trainer Deb Leblanc of Debit in Vancouver, B.C. She suggests encouraging members and clients to invest in an MP3 player instead and to load it with motivating high-energy music.

ing. Rawlins' trainers may start a new member with three consecutive 10-minute bouts using the bike, the elliptical and the treadmill. Their goal is to eventually build the member to 30 minutes of non-stop cardio on one piece of equipment.

#### EXERCISE WITH A PURPOSE

Repeatedly hitting "quick start" on cardio machines is a habit that many exercisers quickly and innocently acquire because it is fast and easy. But Vancouver personal trainer Deb Leblanc says these workouts can easily stagnate any fitness program. She equates them to the "junk miles"—always running the same route at the same pace—that some runners put in.

"Most people need to change their routines about every four to eight weeks," says Leblanc, if they want to keep improving and stay motivated. "You need to regularly shake it up a bit."

Here are three creative ways she mixes up her clients' elliptical workouts. (She precedes each workout with a 5- to 10-minute warm-up):

1. Alternate 1 minute forwards with 1 minute backwards.
2. Start at the high ramp and finish the workout at lowest ramp. (Think of "running" down a long hill.)
3. Alternate 30 seconds at a fast pace (determined by strides per minute) with 1 minute at a moderate pace.

## Do it Right

Be sure your members and clients use proper technique.

#### TREADMILL

Keep your running stride rate (number of strides per minute) between 85 and 95, regardless of the speed, to avoid overstriding. Overstriding, downhill and faster running (such as speed work or tempo running) intensifies eccentric contractions and thus the risk of injury. A proper stride rate also encourages a motion that is smooth and efficient.

#### ELLIPTICAL

Research shows that exercising on an elliptical results in a lower perceived level of exertion than running. Because of this, some people pump up the resistance too high. To avoid an anaerobic workout, find a balance with a medium resistance and high stride rate. Fit distance runners (whose running stride rate is within in the recommended 85 to 95 range) should aim for 150 strides per minute or more on the elliptical.

#### BIKE

Instead of stomping down on the pedals, exert an even force all the way around the pedal stroke by "pedaling in circles." This smooth and continuous flow of energy from the legs to the pedals allows the rider to use the quadriceps and hamstrings and puts less strain on the knees. Here's how: Pedal through the 6:00 position as though pulling your foot back to scrape mud off the bottom of your shoe. Begin the pulling-scraping motion at 3:00. To get through the 12:00 dead spot, imagine kicking a heavy door shut with your foot. Start the pressure at 10:00 and keep pushing to 3:00.

#### New Program Ideas

If you're interested in more program ideas for a favourite piece of cardio equipment, visit [www.precor.com](http://www.precor.com) for a collection of workouts for exercisers of all levels. FBC



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