

## Does Your Exercise Match Your

# FITNESS GOALS?

by Mira Rasmussen, ASC, EP-C

Every form of exercise has benefits, but not every form of exercise will accomplish your goals! Take a **high-intensity program** like CrossFit, for example. The average crossfitter tends to have a wealth of power and strength because their workouts are structured for these benefits. However, if you have other goals in mind such as relieving joint pain or simply weight-loss, a high-intensity training program wouldn't directly meet your needs due to its type of programming. The structure of training programs – including sets, repetitions, intensity and duration – make up a formula for a specific goal.

Do you know what result your current exercise is intended for, or are you just moving and hoping for results? Exercise in general is good, but knowing how to match your cardio exercise and resistance training to your specific fitness goals will produce results much faster!

## GOAL: OVERALL HEALTH AND RECOVERY

**Cardio Exercise:** When you first start moving after a surgical procedure or after long periods of inactivity, it's best to move slow and increase your overall lifestyle activity. Though you're technically burning fat at this stage, it's not being burned at its fullest potential (most fat calories per minute of exercise). The health and recovery goal is about preparing your body for increased movement at higher heart rates while reducing the risk of injury. Generally, the following cardio exercises listed to the right are associated to an intensity of 50-60 percent of Maximum Heart Rate (MHR) and match this particular fitness goal.

- Increased bouts of standing versus sitting
- Walking for chores or errands
- Small bouts of continuous activity, 5-10 minutes at a time
- Flexibility exercises



**Resistance Training:** If you experience pain or weakness when you move, it's important to have a qualified fitness professional examine your movement patterns before you start an exercise program. This evaluation will determine if you have any muscular imbalances, and that information is important for strengthening underactive muscles and learning to relax areas of tension in your body. The workout program that a qualified fitness professional provides can help reduce pain during exercise and help you regain functional muscle and posture.

**Exercise Plan:** This plan should be individually prescribed and is specific to muscular function.

**Program:** Training 2-3 times per week/partial body weight or light resistance with dumbbells or bands/ 2-3 sets of 10-15 reps.

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## GOAL: FAT BURNING AND BASIC ENDURANCE



### Cardio Exercise:

Since oxygen must be readily available to burn fat, this exercise intensity level should allow for easy breathing. The workout should be relatively light, but long. Fat is a slow-burning fuel, and therefore a longer workout will be needed to maximize the amount of fat burned (vs. a high intensity, short duration workout). Well-trained individuals make an exception because they can often burn fat at higher intensity levels. The ability to do this is the ultimate goal for all of us, but being able to burn fat in the meantime is essential! Generally, the following exercises are associated to an intensity of 60-70 percent of MHR and match this particular fitness goal.

- Brisk walking outdoors or on a treadmill
- Riding a stationary bike
- Elliptical training (light to moderate)
- Water walking

**Resistance Training:** Since you've already worked out muscular imbalances and addressed areas of the body that were painful or restricted (if not, see the recovery goal above), it's time for a total body workout! A total body workout continues to improve your fitness level while working the body as a system instead of individual parts. This workout is best for weight-loss because it burns the most calories per session by training all of the muscles in your body in just one workout. This training will also impact the way you move day-to-day, and it will gently tone your muscles as you focus on overall energy expenditure and conditioning.

Sets and repetitions are high on this program. To complete so many reps in good form, you'll have to keep the weight at a moderate level.

**Exercise Plan:** At least one exercise for quadriceps, glutes, hamstrings, core, arms, shoulders, back and chest. Introduce new exercises at least every six weeks.

**Program:** Training 2-3 times per week using moderate resistance with partial body weight, dumbbells, kettlebells, or bands/2-3 sets of 15-20 reps.



## GOAL: AEROBIC FITNESS, HEART HEALTH AND TONING

**Cardio Exercise:** This goal requires a harder workout than the fat burning and basic endurance goal mentioned previously.

Though you'll likely reduce the amount of fat burned during a session, this type of training increases heart health by working the heart as muscle. A stronger heart can work more effectively to deliver nutrient-rich blood to the body, making the heart more resilient against disease. Generally, the following exercises are associated to an intensity of 70-80 percent of MHR and match this particular fitness goal.

- Jogging
- Elliptical (moderate intensity)
- Water aerobics
- Rower (light to moderate intensity)
- Dancing (R&B, slow)
- Bike riding (general)



**Resistance Training:** Toning incorporates the same type of resistance training program for fat burning and basic endurance, but uses slightly more weight and a few less reps. It's common to include small bouts of high intensity exercise in a workout. For example, you may finish off a great squat set (modified for full) with ten chair burpees or a minute of jumping jacks. This will not only train your heart, but it will allow your body to make further muscular adaptations and increase your overall fitness.

Another good example of this type of training is a walk/run track that has exercise stations set up periodically along the path. These are often found in community parks or trails.

**Exercise Plan:** At least one exercise per workout for quadriceps, hamstrings, low back, biceps, triceps, and chest, and two exercises for glutes, upper back and abdominals. Introduce new exercises as soon as the goal for sets and reps has been accomplished.

**Program:** Training 3-4 times per week/ full body weight or moderate-heavy resistance with dumbbells, kettlebells, barbells or bands/ 2-3 sets of 8-10 reps.



## GOAL: INCREASED PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE AND STRENGTH

**Cardio Exercise:** This goal will have you training at higher heart rates where your anaerobic system will kick into gear, thus resulting in improved physical performance. Fat burning during the workout is minimal since your body will need to burn readily available fuel that requires very little oxygen (this fuel is carbohydrates). These higher intensities will tax your body and require a cardiorespiratory system that can support this increased physical effort. Generally, the following exercises are associated to an intensity of 80-90 percent of MHR and match this specific fitness goal.

- Running
- Rowing
- Dancing (Techno, fast)
- Swimming laps
- Athletic cycling or Spin



**Resistance Training:** To gain strength and size, moderate to heavy or heavy weight must be used with a low number of repetitions. Lifting heavy weight in good form requires less reps as muscle exhaustion is reached quickly. This method of training could cause some bulking in your physique depending on your body fat percentage. Bulking occurs when there are gains in muscle size without losing the layer of fat on top of the muscle.

**Program:** 1-2 or 3-4 sets of 5-8 reps (depending on the weight and specific muscle). Training 4-5 times per week/ heavy resistance with dumbbells, kettlebells, barbells or bands/ 4-5 sets of 5-8 reps.

**Exercise Plan:** Split your workouts with concentration on one muscle group at a time. For example, on day one, work out your back and biceps. On day two, work out your chest and triceps. On day three, work out your legs and on day four, repeat with your weakest muscle group. Exercises are changed every four to six weeks after the participant has maxed out their weight goal for each exercise.





## GOAL: SPEED TRAINING, ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

**Cardio Exercise:** This goal uses almost all carbohydrates to fuel short-term bouts of very high intensity exercise. It's best to have previous training experience in order to reap the benefits of this goal with less risk of injury. Generally, the following exercises are associated to an intensity of 90-100 percent of MHR and match this specific fitness goal.

- HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training)
- Sprints (running, cycling, swimming, rowing, etc.)
- Tabata (periods of sprints mixed with rest)

**Resistance Training:** Athletic training is a mixture of agility, strength and power. The sport athlete or crossfitter fits into this category nicely. The base of this training is functional fitness, but the intensity and variation is meant for experienced athletes with strong self-awareness during maximal workouts.

**Exercise Plan/Program:** Highly varied sets and reps, but usually uses maximal weight and exertion. Some exercises are heavy with low reps, whereas others are lighter and faster. Exercises are usually done back-to-back with very little to no rest in between.

## CONCLUSION

Training with a program designed for your goals will produce results faster and drive your motivation towards lifelong fitness. If you have multiple goals from your cardio workouts, spend a small amount of time training in each area – but spend the most amount of time exercising at the heart rate intensity reflecting your primary goal.

Weight training, however, doesn't work the same as cardio training. Pick a specific goal for resistance training and stay with that program for at least three months. Once you feel like you have accomplished that goal, decide to either maintain those benefits by changing up your exercises or pick a different goal altogether and work with that programming for at least three months.

True health and fitness require not just cardio or resistance training, but both. Together, these two forms of exercise – when matched appropriately – will help you reach your fitness goals!

### **About the Author:**

*Mira Rasmussen, ASC, EP-C, is the founder and president of Fitness Beyond Training which specializes in functional training for the general population, athletes and those managing disease or any physical limitations. Committed to promoting a healthy lifestyle, Mira serves on the Obesity Action Coalition's Education Committee and frequently writes for Your Weight Matters Magazine. For more information on Mira, please visit [www.fitnessbeyondtraining.com](http://www.fitnessbeyondtraining.com).*