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# AEROBIC VS ANAEROBIC exercise

Confused about whether you should be exercising aerobically or anaerobically, or even what these two words mean? Here's a simple guide.

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According to exercise scientist Martha Lourey Bird, aerobic training is any low to moderate intensity exercise. "A good way to tell if you're working aerobically is if you can comfortably hold a conversation," she says. With aerobic exercise, muscles are less

likely to get tired, so generally you can engage in this form of exercise for longer periods of time. Typically, you're working aerobically when your heart rate is around 60 to 85 per cent of your predicted maximum heart rate.

When you're exercising at an aerobic level, and are sufficiently fuelled, you are able to take in plenty of oxygen and your muscles are able to contract without fatigue.

Exercising at a much higher intensity – at more than 85 per cent of your predicted maximum heart rate – means that you cannot get sufficient oxygen to your muscles and they begin to work anaerobically, producing waste molecules, such as lactic acid, that cause you to tire easily and feel uncomfortable.

"Anaerobic exercise is high-intensity, short-duration effort – strenuous activities such as lifting heavy weights or sprinting are good examples. You couldn't speak more than a few words when exercising at this level," says Lourey Bird.

But anaerobic and aerobic exercise are linked. There are plenty of activities where you'll switch between the two. Tennis is a good example – you need the stamina to stay on court for the length of a match, but also need the short, sharp bursts of anaerobic fitness to run for the ball.

So which should you be aiming for when you're in the gym? That comes down to what you're trying to achieve and your level of fitness.

Aerobic training is something that everybody can do, says Lourey Bird: "If you're overweight, unfit, or a beginner, aerobic training is where you should start." But if you want to achieve a higher level of fitness or rapidly improve, say, your five or 10 kilometre run times, or your rowing or cycling performance, then interval training is an ideal way to add some anaerobic training to your exercise plan.

And if you're trying to lose weight, exercise that incorporates both aerobic and anaerobic intervals is the best way to go, with recent research from the University of New South

Wales showing that short bursts of anaerobic training can effectively utilise fat stores and help shift unwanted kilos. Dr Gail Trapp, who led the team of researchers, compared the

## FAST OR SLOW TWITCH MUSCLE FIBRES: WHAT ARE THEY?

"Fast-twitch muscle fibres respond more to anaerobic training and get larger the more you train anaerobically. Slow-twitch muscle fibres respond more to aerobic training. That's why, for example, if you are a marathon runner you are less likely to have bulky muscles than say, a sprinter," says Lourey Bird.

Though we are all born with both types of muscle fibres, some people are genetically predisposed to have more of one type than another, making them potentially better endurance athletes or conversely, better at sprint or power-based sports.

results from two groups of overweight women who cycled three times a week over a 15-week period. The group who did eight seconds of sprinting on a bike, followed by 12 seconds of exercising lightly, for a total 20 minutes, lost three times as much fat as the group who exercised at a continuous, regular pace for 40 minutes. **6**

## FINDING YOUR MAXIMUM HEART RATE

A simple way to gain an approximation of your maximum heart rate is to take 220 and minus your age. So, if you are 35, then your maximum heart rate is around 185 beats per minute. To work aerobically, you need to get your heart rate up to 60 per cent of your maximum heart rate and to move into the anaerobic zone, you would need to get your heart rate up to 85 per cent and beyond.

This simple calculation is helpful if you are relatively new to exercise; if you are more experienced, then try taking your heart rate at the end of a very strenuous run or other form of exercise and use that as your maximum.