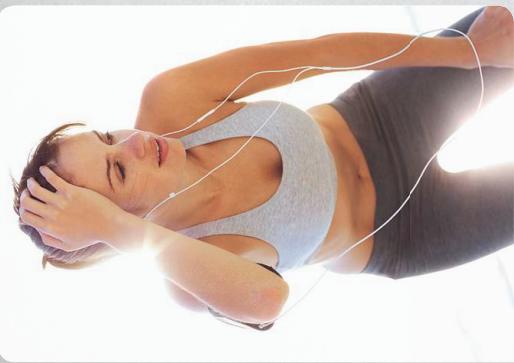


AEROBIC VS ANAEROBIC Exercise

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

WORDS KAYTE NUNN



According to exercise scientist Martha Lourey Bird, aerobic training is any way 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.

FAST OR SLOW TWITCH MUSCLE FIBRES: WHAT ARE THEY?

"Fast-twitch muscle fibres respond more to aerobic training and get fatigued the more you train aerobically. 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 fatigue 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 of 20 minutes, lost three times as much fat as the group who exercised at a continuous, regular pace for 40 minutes. ¹

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.

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.

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