

Cardiovascular Training for *Fitness, Health and Youthfulness!*



By: Philip Legge RNC, CH, CDMT

There are primarily two areas to a person's fitness and health development. One is 'Cardiovascular Training', and the other is 'Strength Training'. Cardiovascular training is mainly working internally on gland and organ strength. A person's outward appearance can also change in the area of weight loss, and overall muscle toning with less body fat. In contrast, strength training mainly focuses on skeletal muscle and joint strength. The outward change is an improvement in a person's level of strength and the shape of their body. **Both areas of training are important** for an optimum level of fitness and health. In this article we are going to begin exploring cardiovascular training and its life-giving benefits.

How It First Began

Cardiovascular training has become a worldwide practice over the last 40 years, or since the 1970's approximately. As recently as the 1960's, and even into the 1970's heart patients were often kept in bed for weeks and even months after having a heart attack. The theory was that the heart muscle had been damaged by the heart attack, and it needed rest to heal and to get stronger. The result was that many heart patients died in bed, or if they did recuperate they did not participate in an active lifestyle. Most heart patients were expected to take drugs on a long-term basis, and also maintain an inactive lifestyle of sitting around and resting.

This all began to change in the 1970's because there was more research into exercise programs for athletes, both professional and amateur. Sports were becoming more competitive and more lucrative because of the boost in advertising revenue from sports being broadcast on television more frequently. As a result, teams were trying to improve the athletic performance of their players, and also decrease injuries and shorten

the rehabilitation time of injured players. The space program also caused scientists to look into improving the strength and physical conditioning of astronauts because of the extreme demands put on the human body by space travel. Cardiovascular training and also strength training were found to **dramatically improve a person's physical strength** for sports, for space travel, for work or any other physical activity. Another benefit was that many injuries could be prevented, and if a person was injured their recovery time was much shorter.

The question arose during the 1970's that since cardiovascular training and strength training had such amazing benefits for a healthy, youthful person, could there be any potential benefits for the sick and the elderly if they had a modified program that was scaled down to their fitness level. Research and testing began, and the results shook the medical field like an earthquake! Cardiologists began getting heart patients out of bed sooner after their heart attack, and started them on a graduated walking program. Within a few months many patients were walking several miles a day, and were in much better condition than before their heart attack. **Some of these middle-aged patients were going into the Boston Marathon and completing it!** The medical profession said they have

discovered that the heart, even though it is the cardiac muscle, is not unlike our skeletal muscles, and the heart needs regular and appropriate exercise to be strong and function properly. If it does not get proper exercise it will decondition and weaken just like any other muscle in the body, and the results can be fatal. This research and testing was conducted all over the world, and proved that most people have a health and fitness potential that is much higher than they realize. Many people suffer with poor health and premature ageing when they could enjoy a strong, healthy and youthful body, and be much more productive in their work, family life and social life.

Target Heart Rate

So what do we mean by a good cardiovascular program? It is essential that a person exercises in their **age-related target zone**. A person's maximum heart rate is 220 beats per minute minus their age. Therefore, a 20 year old person would have a maximum heart rate of 200 beats per minute, and a 40 year old would have a maximum heart rate of 180 beats per minute, and a 70 year old would have a maximum heart rate of 150 beats per minute. If the individual is in good health they would normally exercise between 65% and 85%



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of their maximum heart rate. For a 20 year old this would be between 130 and 170 beats per minute. For a 40 year old the range would be 117 to 153 beats per minute. And for the 70 year old the range would be 98 to 128 beats per minute. People who are in excellent condition, or who train for competitive activities will sometimes train beyond 85% of their maximum heart rate.

Saving Beats

It was discovered that a good cardiovascular program could reduce a person's resting heart rate by up to 25 beats per minute. That translates into 1,500 beats per hour, or 36,000 beats per day, and in one month **over 1 million beats could be saved** on the heart muscle! This is one of the greatest life extension programs available.

Depending on a person's fitness level and health concerns they might start with as little as a few minutes of training, 3 times per week. Each week they should be able to increase their training session by a few minutes, but only if they are comfortable doing so. With a graduated program like

this, after 6 to 8 weeks a person would be up to 20 to 30 minutes per session 3 times a week. This is considered to be the minimum duration and frequency for significant improvement in their level of cardiovascular fitness. However, before beginning any exercise program it is important to get your doctor's advice. Cardiovascular training benefits all 12 Systems in the body, and we will discuss some of those benefits in our article next month in "The Rural Route".

There is a famous saying that says, **"The two best doctors in the world are ..."** Do you know the rest of that quote? We will complete this interesting sentence for you next month. ✨



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