



Work All Your Muscles with Cross-Training

CHALLENGE
Do 3 types of
physical activity
each week.

Requirements to

Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Keep a written record of the type of exercises you do each day and the number of minutes you spend doing them.
2. Read “The Benefits of Cross-Training,” “Types of Cross-Training Activities,” and “Cross-Training Tips.”
3. To complete the Challenge, do at least 3 types of physical activities each week, with a total of 22 exercise days this month.
4. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

The Benefits of Cross-Training

There are many muscles in your body – more than 600 of them! Some of your muscles help move food through your digestive system and pump blood through your body. Skeletal muscles help you walk, jump, carry heavy boxes, and do sit-ups. They're the ones that you can strengthen with exercise. But no single exercise or series of activities can stretch and strengthen them all. That's why cross-training is important.

With cross-training, you add new activities to your regular physical activity by:

- **Combining multiple activities into the same workout.** For example, you could begin your workout with a short bike ride, followed by stair climbing, and finish with 15 minutes of walking.
- **Doing different activities on alternating days.** For example, if you normally run, plan to swim, bike, ski, or skate once or twice a week instead.

Having a regular cross-training regimen will keep all of your muscles toned and strong, not just those used in your major activity. Think of it as an ongoing body tune-up. If you do the same exercise every day, you continually exercise the same muscles – which might cause strain and injury to the overworked muscles. Cross-training actually reduces the risk of injury.

Variety: The Spice of (a Physically Fit) Life

If you don't exercise at all, starting with a little bit of a lot of activities can be an easy and fun way to begin a lifelong fitness habit. Walk one day; bicycle the next. Play basketball or tennis on another day during the week. Take your time and add activities slowly. Over a period of time, build up to 30 minutes or more of moderate and varied activity each day. When you increase the number of activities and time spent, you increase your health benefits.

No matter how fit you are, there's a break-even point for your body. For example, training intensively can cause knee or leg problems for runners; swimmers can experience shoulder problems. Cross-training allows even the most ardent runner or swimmer to be more active. Adding a rigorous cycling session or two each week will increase cardiovascular fitness but keep muscles from getting overworked.

Physical activity of any kind is good for you.

Cross-training can help you maintain your conditioning even when injured. A sore foot may keep you from running but not from swimming. A sore shoulder can limit your swimming but still allow you to walk briskly.

An important and often overlooked benefit of cross-training is its ability to motivate. Many fitness experts agree: Pursuing a variety of activities can keep you from getting bored with your exercise program. When you find your exercise program interesting and enjoyable, you're more likely to keep at it.

If maintaining a healthy weight is one of your goals, remember that all continuous activities burn fat and calories. You can often exercise longer and therefore burn more calories by doing a variety of physical activities.



Types of Cross-Training Activities

Different activities provide different benefits for your body. Here is just a small sample:



- **Aerobic Fitness** – brisk walking, jogging, swimming, biking, cross-country skiing, rowing, inline skating, stair-stepping, aerobic dance, and ice skating. You strengthen your entire cardiovascular system.



- **Anaerobic Fitness** – short periods of high intensity exercises (e.g., walking fast, climbing stairs even faster). High-intensity activities can be beneficial, especially if you're playing in competitive sports (and you have no health problems).



- **Muscle Strengthening** – lifting free weights or using weight machines. Strong muscles help you maintain and improve balance, posture, and daily activities.



- **Muscle Endurance** – high repetition of push-ups, curl-ups, pull-ups, or other calisthenics. Endurance helps you keep doing an activity longer and recover from fatigue sooner.



- **Flexibility** – stretching or yoga. Flexibility and mobility will gradually decrease without regular stretching.

Cross-Training Tips

Be Active Daily

Be sure to get at least 30 minutes of activity that makes you breathe hard on at least 5 days each week – more is better. Aerobic activity helps build your stamina or “staying power.” How hard do you need to push yourself? If you can talk without any trouble at all, you are not working hard enough. If you can't talk at all, it's too hard.

Lift Weights

Strengthening exercises build muscles. Lifting weights or using weight machines is one of the best ways to improve your strength as you get older. When you retain your muscle strength, you can get up from a chair by yourself, lift your grandchildren, and walk through the park. Use weights 2-3 days each week.

Flex and Balance

Stretching can improve your flexibility. Moving more freely will make it easier for you to reach down to tie your shoes or look over your shoulder when you back the car out of your driveway. Also, do things to help your balance. Try standing on one foot, then the other. If you can, don't hold on to anything for support. At least 2 days a week, do exercises that increase your flexibility and balance.

Go the Distance, Once in a While

To build endurance and health, choose one day a week to exercise for a longer period of time than usual. If you typically bike 30 minutes daily, for example, go for an hour-long ride – even longer if you want to!

Ease Into It

Even if you are already active, ease into a new activity. Just because you swim regularly doesn't mean you're ready to put on a 40-pound pack and hike steep mountain trails. Rather than add on another activity to an already strenuous exercise schedule, replace a workout or two each week with your new activity. Whatever cross-training sport you choose – whether climbing stairs, playing tennis, or cycling – limit yourself to 20 minutes or so until your muscles become accustomed to it. Once you are in shape for the new workout, you can increase the duration.

Take the time to find activities you like, try them, and continue to participate in a variety of activities from now on.

Ready, get set, cross-train!



Health Challenge™ Calendar



CHALLENGE
Do 3 types of physical activity each week.

Work All Your Muscles With Cross-Training

Instructions

1. Post the Health Challenge Calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Use this calendar to record your exercise program (minutes/day as well as type of exercise), weekly weight, and any other items you may want to track.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you were physically active. To meet this challenge, you must do at least 3 types of physical activities each week and accumulate a total of 22 exercise days this month. Then keep up this health practice for a lifetime of best health!

MONTH: _____							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
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_____ Number of days this month I stretched

_____ Number of days this month I did strengthening exercises

_____ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of aerobic physical activity

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Signature _____ Date _____

