

Familiarize yourself with the options that increase the intensity of the workout. Some machines have elevating ramps under each pedal. Others increase the intensity through faster movement or by changing the resistance of the pedals with a tension control.

Using an Elliptical Trainer

Follow the manual regarding directions for proper set-up and use of the machine. Make certain the trainer operates properly and be sure that adequate space is available and that the power supply is nearby. Adjust the machine to suit your size and range of movement. Get comfortable with any programming features such as exercise time, distance goal, resistance level, speed level and caloric expenditure.

When exercising, maintain the correct posture by keeping your shoulder back, head up, chin straight, abdominals tight, and arms relaxed. Do not lean forward or grab and grip the balance bars tightly. The participant's weight should be supported by the lower body.

Important Points to Remember:

Before you start exercising on the elliptical trainer, make sure that you are familiar with the controls that increase speed and/or resistance. Make sure that the emergency shut-off switch or button works.

Maintain a good posture: Shoulders should be back, head up and slightly forward, chin up and abdominals tight. Look forward, not down at your feet. Do not grip the handrails too tightly. Make sure that your weight is evenly distributed and that your lower body supports the majority of your weight.

Stride: Relax and maintain a good stride going through your normal range of motion.

Make it a habit: An elliptical trainer is only as good for your health as the frequency with which you use it. Set a specific time of day, set a specific number of minutes and make it routine. Start out slowly and make sure that you have checked with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

A Complete Physical Activity Program

A well rounded program of physical activity includes aerobic exercise and strength training exercise, but not necessarily in the same session. This blend helps to maintain or improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness and overall health and function. Regular physical activity will provide more health benefits than sporadic, high-intensity workouts, so choose exercises you are likely to enjoy and that you can incorporate into your schedule.

ACSM's physical activity recommendations for healthy adults, updated in 2007, recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (working hard enough to break a sweat, but still able to carry on a conversation) five days per week, or 20 minutes of more vigorous activity three days per week. Combinations of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity can be performed to meet this recommendation. Typical aerobic exercises include walking and running, stair climbing, cycling on a stationary or moving bike, rowing, cross-country skiing, and swimming.

In addition, strength training should be performed a minimum of two days each week, with 8-12 repetitions of 8-10 different exercises that target all major muscle groups. This type of training can be accomplished using body weight, resistance bands, free weights, medicine balls or weight machines.

This brochure was written by Hank Williford, Ed.D., FACSM and Michelle Olson, Ph.D., FACSM. ACSM grants permission to reproduce this brochure, if it is reproduced in its entirety without alteration. The text may be reproduced in another publication if it is used in its entirety without alteration and the following statement added: Reprinted with permission of the American College of Sports Medicine. Copyright © 2005 American College of Sports Medicine. This brochure is a product of ACSM's Consumer Information Committee.

Prior to beginning any exercise program, including the activities depicted in this brochure, individuals should seek medical evaluation and clearance to engage in activity. Not all exercise programs are suitable for everyone and some programs may in fact result in injury. Activities should be carried out at a pace that is comfortable for the user. Users should discontinue participation in any exercise activity that causes pain or discomfort. In such event, medical consultation should be immediately obtained.

Selecting and Effectively Using

An Elliptical Trainer



AMERICAN COLLEGE
of SPORTS MEDICINE®
www.acsm.org

ACSM... Advancing Health through
Science, Fitness and Medicine

Staying Active Pays Off!

Those who are physically active tend to live longer, healthier lives. Research shows that even moderate physical activity—such as 30 minutes a day of brisk walking—significantly contributes to longevity. A physically active person with such risk factors as high blood pressure, diabetes or even a smoking habit can get real benefits from regular physical activity as part of daily life.

As many dieters have found, exercise can help you stay on a diet and lose weight. What's more, regular exercise can help lower blood pressure, control blood sugar, improve cholesterol levels and build stronger, denser bones.

The First Step

Before you begin an exercise program, take a fitness test, or substantially increase your level of activity, make sure to answer the following questions. This physical activity readiness questionnaire (PAR-Q) will help determine your suitability for beginning an exercise routine or program.

- Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition or that you should participate in physical activity only as recommended by a doctor?
- Do you feel pain in your chest during physical activity?
- In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?
- Do you lose your balance because of dizziness? Do you ever lose consciousness?
- Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?
- Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs for your blood pressure or a heart condition?
- Do you know of any reason you should not participate in physical activity?

If you answered yes to one or more questions, if you are over 40 years of age and have been inactive, or if you are concerned about your health, consult a physician before taking a fitness test or substantially increasing your physical activity. If you answered no to each question, then it's likely that you can safely begin fitness testing and training.

Selecting a Home Elliptical Trainer

Elliptical trainers have become one of the most popular machines for cardiovascular exercise. These trainers engage the legs in a movement pattern that combines the motion of stair stepping with cross-country skiing, providing a low-impact workout. Some elliptical devices also include poles that can be maneuvered with the arms while the legs are in motion, similar to cross-country machines. This option increases the amount of muscle mass used to perform the exercise.

Following are guidelines that should be considered when purchasing an elliptical trainer. These recommendations will help you select a trainer that suits your specific needs. Before making any purchases, always be sure to try out the machine so that you can familiarize yourself with its options.

Safety

Make sure the equipment is properly fitted to your size and movement range. If the machine is motorized, there should be a safety turn-off control.

When in use, the machine should be very sturdy and should neither move nor have the tendency to tip over. The side rails should also be sturdy and provide for adequate balance.

Check the area around the machine for adequate headroom and space for leg and arm motion.

Maintenance and Durability

- Is the machine manufacturer reputable and reliable?
- Does the trainer come with a warranty?
- What does the warranty cover and how long is the warranty period?
- Is the machine durable, easily assembled, and easily maintained?
- Elliptical machines tend to be rather large — is the space in which it is to be used large enough?
- If it is to be stored between use, is there adequate space for storage?
- Are local technicians available for service?

Power, Performance, and Operation

- Is the trainer motorized or non-motorized?
- Does your home have the proper power supply? (Motorized machines may require 120 to 220 volts)
- Does the trainer require calibration?
- How often does the trainer have to be serviced?
- Is the noise level acceptable?
- Is the trainer sturdy and stable?
- Is there a control panel/read-out? Is it easy to read? Is it accurate?
- Does the control panel offer the information that is important for your needs (time, distance, resistance level, calories expended, etc.)?
- Is the instruction manual easy to read and follow?

Other Considerations

Make certain the pedals will comfortably accommodate the size of your feet. Pedals with a textured "non-slip" surface and high curved ridges will also prevent your feet from sliding around or even off the pedal when exercising.

The stride length permitted by the trainer is also an important factor. Avoid purchasing a trainer if the stride length is too limited for your leg movement range. Some machines allow you to adjust the stride length.

Overall fit is very important. A good fit should allow you to move comfortably and smoothly, with a good upright posture and without the chance of your knees bumping into the console. The fixed hand-support rails should also allow you to maintain a comfortable upright posture versus a tendency to lean too far forward (which can be stressful to the back).

If the machine provides upper body handles or poles, make sure that the handles are sturdy, easy to reach, and that the handgrips are comfortable. Avoid trainers with upper body poles that infringe on your range of motion or cause contact with your knees.