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CARDIOVASCULAR TRAINING

A merry heart goes all day.
-Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale

The heart is a muscular pump, about the size of your fist. It beats non-stop every minute of every day, sending blood throughout the circulatory system. In a typical day some 2000 gallons of blood will pass through the heart. Like any muscle, the heart needs exercise or it will deteriorate.

In the past, bodybuilders and powerlifters often built strength and muscle while neglecting the body's most important muscle– the heart. Conversely, many endurance runners have often concentrated solely on cardiovascular endurance, with little regard for upper body strength.

These days that's all changing. A more enlightened attitude, along with the unprecedented interest in fitness has led athletes in all sports to recognize the value of total conditioning. Research and sports physiology have proven the value of all-around training. It's becoming much less common for the runner to only run, the swimmer to only swim, the lifter to only lift. In many ways the age of specialized, one-track training is over. We now know better.

If your goal is to be in the best possible condition, why work hard on muscular and strength development and neglect the heart and vascular system? You might look great on the outside, but inside the motor and pumping system that keeps the body healthy and alive can be suffering from neglect. A combination of weight training and cardiovascular endurance training is ideal.

The leading cause of death in America today is heart disease, and the most effective way to avoid this is by good nutrition and a cardiovascular exercise program. The cardiovascular program should involve large muscle groups and the exercises should have two characteristics:

1. They should be done at a relatively low intensity, so you can keep exercising for 30-60 minutes at a time;
2. They should be rhythmical, meaning that there is a brief rest period for the main

muscle group when another muscle group takes over.

The aerobic exercises should be performed at least three days a week for a desirable training effect to occur.

Consult Your Doctor

Before beginning a strenuous cardiovascular exercise program, check with your doctor, especially if you are over 35, overweight under stress or have not exercised for a while. Your exam should consist of a complete medical history, resting and stress electrocardiogram, blood analysis, urinalysis, chest x-ray, pulmonary function evaluation, and a coronary risk profile. These tests should provide your physician with the necessary data to evaluate your current state of health.