

# FITNESS FOCUS

## "BEING HEART SMART IN 2009"

It's a new year, a fresh start to do something significant. How about working for your heart? It works very hard for you; each and every day it beats 100,000 times. A wonderful way to work for your heart is to exercise the heart. Cardiovascular exercise, or simply cardio, builds a stronger, healthier heart. Why is it so important for you to build a healthier heart? Heart disease is the number one killer of Americans. Those who possess reasonable amounts of fitness have a reduced risk of premature death, decreased risk for heart disease, and improved quality of life.

So how do you go about achieving this cardio exercise? Cardio is any exercise that makes your heart work harder to pump blood and oxygen throughout your body. Biking, rowing, running and power walking are just some activities that contribute to a healthy heart. There are different methods to check your intensity to see if you are really working your heart in a beneficial way. The more intense the activity, the faster your heart will beat. Therefore, monitoring your heart rate during exercise can be an excellent way to monitor exercise intensity.

There are many different ways to measure your intensity. One way is by checking your heart rate during exercise. To check your heart rate, you would find your pulse by placing your fingertips (index and middle finger) over the artery at the wrist or the neck. Make sure to press gently, so as to not cut off circulation through the artery. Count each pulse for a minute or count for 15 sec. and multiply by 4. Begin your count with zero, not one. For a healthy workout, you want your heart rate to be around 55-65% of your maximum heart rate. To find your max heart rate, take 220 and subtract your age. For example:  $220 - 25 = 195$ ,  $195 \times .55 = 107$ bpm.



An easier way to measure intensity is by your Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE). Your RPE is a scale of how hard you are working. The scale starts at 0 and goes to 10. A rate of 0 would be lying on the couch; a rate of 10 would be the most exerting activity you've ever done. While exercising, you would want to be at a 5-6 on the scale, which would be a moderate hard to hard rating. Never work out at a 10 on the RPE scale, It is not safe to push yourself to your breaking point by exercising at too high of a rate and run the risk of injury.

To decide which cardio activity is best for you, choose which goals you have concerning heart health or fitness performance. If your goal is to improve your cardiovascular fitness, then any cardio exercise is good. If your goal is fitness performance such as running a marathon, then exercise specific to that goal would be important.

So whatever your goal, whether it is to become heart healthy or perform better at a specific sport, come on in to the Nimkee Fitness Center. Here we have many different cardio machines: Reebok Body Trec, Nu-Step, Treadmills, Stair Masters, Tectrix Climb Max, Rowing Machines, Stationary Bikes, Versa Climbers, Stairmaster Step Mill, Jacobs Ladder, and a Kayak Machine. We also offer some exciting classes such as Zumba, which is all cardio, Step and Sculpt and Pump It Up which is half cardio and half strength training.

There are many benefits to good cardiovascular fitness including improving your ability to function and overall well being. Make a very noteworthy goal this year and exercise your heart!

BY JAYME GREEN, FITNESS COORDINATOR