

Bodyweight Cardio Exercises for Maximum Burn

When we hear “bodyweight cardio exercises,” It’s important to realize that the health and fitness industry has multiplied its efforts in the last few years and introduced some novel concepts in the wellness world. You can now ditch the fancy gym equipment and build your muscles at home!

With cardio, you may notice a significant difference in your metabolism, endurance, and overall fitness (15). A recent study found that participants who engaged in whole-body aerobic-resistance training showed greater substantial improvements in cardiovascular fitness than those who only were on treadmills and those who did not exercise (2).

Facts like these motivate people to explore the potential of bodyweight cardio exercises. A good cardio calisthenics workout performed at home can sometimes bring much better outcomes than quick workout sessions at the gym. If you wish to start your journey into bodyweight exercises, this article might give you the kick you need. We have covered full bodyweight cardio exercises and some guidance necessary for beginners.

Read on to find out!

Can Bodyweight Exercises Be Cardio?

Yes, bodyweight exercises can be cardio. Cardiovascular exercises refer to a type of workout that can increase your heart rate and blood pumping. Also called aerobic or endurance exercise, cardiovascular exercise is any form of activity that uses aerobic metabolism. (14). When performed at moderate to high intensity and circuit-style, some bodyweight exercises can boost your heart rate and keep it elevated. Some of these are:

- Jumping jacks
- Burpees
- Mountain climbers
- High knees
- Squat jumps

Apart from these exercises, many others could be added to a cardio regime. Make sure that you have a base level of cardio strength before you start including these in your routine because the intensity of some exercises could be pretty high. Before incorporating jumping or high-impact bodyweight exercises, be sure that you have healthy joints and proper form to minimize injury risk.

For optimal cardiovascular benefits, perform bodyweight exercises in an interval style. Work intensely for 20-30 seconds, followed by brief rest periods or a different exercise (5). Once you incorporate cardio exercises into your routine, you reap the following health rewards:

Better Recovery Between Strength Training

When your aerobic system improves, you are improving the body's effectiveness of clearing the waste products of exercise. This can enhance the recovery process (12). In addition, the extra blood flowing to your muscles can heal the damage resulting from resistance training.

Increased Work Capacity

Regular workouts can improve your cardio function and your ability to work at the gym or sports field (11). This happens because your cardio-respiratory system is now more efficient.

Reduced Risk of Heart Diseases

Regular cardio can reduce the risk factors of heart diseases like high cholesterol and high blood pressure. It reduces the bad cholesterol (LDL) and increases the good cholesterol (HDL) (1).

A peek into these benefits makes it evident that bodyweight exercises can positively impact our overall health. If you were confused about including these in your routine, you should cast aside all doubts and immediately create a routine!

Is It OK to Do Cardio Without Weights?

Yes, it is absolutely okay to perform cardio without weights. In fact, many people choose bodyweight cardio exercises because they require little to no equipment and can be performed anywhere. Some of these activities, like running, swimming, dancing, jumping rope, and other bodyweight exercises, can provide results similar to cardio without depending on the weights.

According to Statista, cardio activities like running and jogging were among the most popular exercises between 2009 and 2019 (8). Also, the number of people indulging in these outdoor cardio activities increased by 15 million participants in the same period. This shows that more people have accepted the benefits and adrenaline boost of cardio exercises.

This was one reason why more people started looking for cardio calisthenics. A well-rounded exercise routine at the end of the day is just what you need to blow off steam!

Lifting weights is not necessary for a good workout. You can enjoy similar benefits if you learn how to do it right. Here are some reasons why people prefer to do cardio exercises without relying on weights:

- **Calorie Burning:** When performed at moderate to high intensity, Cardio can burn calories and help you reach your weight loss goals.
- **Accessibility:** You can perform cardio literally anywhere! There is no need to carry equipment. Simply find a clear space and a quiet environment, and get going!

- **Variety:** Many cardio options don't use weights. These include swimming, cycling, jumping rope, etc. This means you have the flexibility to change routines whenever boredom may strike.

Remember that you need to do a combination of exercises to keep your body in peak shape. Although cardio is a great way to lose weight, you must also build muscles. This is why experts recommend working out with weights some days each week. You can create a good calisthenics workout along with weightlifting and cardio to keep your routine exciting.

You should be careful when trying to get the best results from both. That said, using weights while doing cardio is a pretty good idea. This can help you build muscles while also giving you a cardio workout.

What Cardio Can I Do Without Equipment?

Many cardio exercises can be performed without equipment. Below, we have listed a bunch of those. Note that this isn't a complete workout plan. Instead, you can choose exercises to get your blood pumping and match your fitness level.

Here you go!

Jumping Jacks

This classic bodyweight exercise is a great way to warm up or have an active rest period between the exercises. To perform the jumping jacks, you have to:

1. Start standing with your feet together and arms at your sides.
2. Jump your feet apart while raising your arms out to the sides.
3. Jump your feet back together and bring your arms back down.
4. Try to clap your hands above your head and then down at your sides as you jump.

Burpee

This is a heavy squat exercise. This means you require a good level of muscle mass to do it, which can quickly elevate your heart rate. To do this:

1. Start standing up straight.
2. Squat down deeply, placing your hands on the floor.
3. Kick your feet back like you're going to do a push-up.
4. Jump your feet back forward to the squat position.
5. Stand up tall, pushing your hips forward and squeezing your glutes (butt muscles) at the top.
6. Add a jump at the top or a push-up when your feet are back, for extra challenges.

Woodchops

This is a cardio exercise that targets your core muscles, and it has the potential to strengthen your abdominals (13). Follow these steps to perform woodchops:

1. Start with your hands together near the right side of your head, elbows bent.
2. Put most of your weight on your right foot, lifting your left heel slightly.
3. Pretend you're chopping wood: Swing your arms diagonally across your body and bending your knees.
4. As you chop, shift your weight to your left foot and lift your right heel slightly.
5. Bring your hands back to the starting position.
6. Repeat the same movement on your left side.

Skaters

This is a side-to-side bodyweight exercise. It helps to improve your agility and balance (10). These are the steps to perform skaters:

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent.
2. Jump to the right, landing on your right foot. As you jump, swing your left leg behind your right.
3. Touch your right foot with your left hand.
4. Repeat the jump to the left side, landing on your left foot and swinging your right leg behind.
5. Touch your left foot with your right hand.
6. Keep jumping from side to side, swinging your arms to help you move.

Mountain Climbers

This is an excellent introduction to the world of bodyweight cardio. It works on your core, arms, shoulders, and legs (7). To do the mountain climbers:

1. Start on your hands and knees like you're about to crawl.
2. Get into a push-up position (plank) with your body in a straight line and your core tight.
3. Bring your right foot forward next to your right hand as if stepping into a lunge.
4. Quickly jump up and switch your feet so your left foot is in front.
5. Keep switching your feet back and forth in a jumping motion.

High Knees

High knees are a cardiovascular exercise where you must lift your knees high towards your chest and alternate your legs. This resembles running in place but with higher knee lifts. The method to perform high knees is as follows:

1. Stand straight with feet shoulder-width apart.

2. Run in place, lifting your knees as high as possible towards your chest.
3. Pump your arms vigorously for extra power.
4. Make sure your calf muscles are warmed up before starting!

Up-Down Planks

This is an advanced variant of the regular plank, where you have to lower yourself on your forearms. Here is how to perform the up-down planks:

1. Start in a regular plank position. Your body should stay straight, supported by your hands and toes, with your core muscles tight.
2. Lower yourself to your forearms, first your left arm, then your right.
3. Push yourself back up to the starting plank position, first with your left arm, then your right. Make sure to keep your back straight the whole time.
4. Repeat, alternating which arm you lower first.

Apart from these, there are many other cardio exercises that you can find on the internet. We suggest you read the instructions carefully and choose exercises that align with your physical fitness. For instance, consider calisthenics for the back and other cardio movements if you have trouble with your posture.

Plenty of proof shows how cardio can have a good impact on your muscles. A review published in the Exercise Sport Science Review found out that even though people usually think cardio doesn't help build muscles much, much proof shows that aerobic exercises can make your muscles grow bigger (9).

What Are the Top 5 Cardio Workouts?

You'd be surprised to know that the activities that we always considered as leisure can actually make up a good cardio session. When you don't have the equipment, you can use your own body as a fat burner. Here are the top five activities that could be counted as cardio:

Jogging or Running

This is one of the best cardio exercises to add to their workout regime. It doesn't rely on any equipment. Just find a plain ground or an empty street, and you are good to go.

Research suggests that running for a minimum of 10 minutes daily can substantially reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease. Additionally, runners may experience a decrease in their resting heart rate, which is a crucial marker of overall health and fitness (4).

Swimming

Swimming is also classified as a cardio workout because the person uses their whole body against the water. Swimmers may have a 41% lower risk of dying from heart disease or stroke

and a 28% lower risk of dying early from any cause, according to a major study conducted by Swim England (3).

Cycling

The prevalence of lifestyle diseases in the young generation has compelled many people to choose cycling. It is an effective way to move your whole body. Plus, you can use it to commute wherever you want!

Cycling regularly can improve your heart health and overall fitness. Depending on how hard you ride and your weight, you can burn a significant amount of calories cycling – around 250 to 700 calories per hour (16).

Jumping Rope

Jumping is an excellent cardio exercise that can help to improve heart health. If lifting weights isn't your cup of tea, you can always switch to jumping rope.

A 2017 study looked at the effects of indoor cycling and jump rope exercise on people with larger bodies (10). Those who did jump rope exercises had lower body mass index (BMI) and better lung capacity (how much air you can breathe). Strong lung capacity helps with overall fitness, allowing you to exercise longer and with less difficulty.

High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)

HIIT exercises typically include intense workout phases lasting from a few seconds to several minutes. They are usually performed at a high level, usually 80% - 95% of a person's maximum heart rate.

A 2014 study in the British Journal of Sports Medicine showed that HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training) is almost twice as effective as MICT (Moderate-Intensity Continuous Training) at improving fitness levels in people with conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity (6).

The Bottom Line

It may seem relatively easy, but adding bodyweight cardio exercises to an ordinary workout requires careful planning. You should also note that quality is more important than quantity during dynamic workouts. Go for the exercises that work well for your skill level, experience, body type, and structure. If any exercise hurts, use commonsense and don't put yourself through pain. Choose exercises that give your body a training impact. To keep the cardio fresh, opt for exercises that blend well with your body and make you feel good!

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. **Why cardio alone is not enough?**

Cardio alone focuses on burning calories and improving cardiovascular health. It may neglect other aspects of fitness, like building strength and flexibility. Integrating strength and flexibility exercises and cardio can create a well-rounded fitness routine.

2. Will I lose fat without cardio?

Yes, you can lose fat without cardio. This can be achieved through a calorie deficit and by strength training exercises that build muscle.

3. Does walking count as cardio?

Yes, walking is a form of cardio exercise. Although it isn't as intense as running or cycling, it can elevate a person's heart rate and provide cardiovascular benefits.

4. Is only doing cardio fine?

No, Adding strength and flexibility training is also needed to impact the body positively.

Sources

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Meta Description

Bodyweight cardio exercises can be a game-changer in your fitness routine. Don't you think so?
Read on to find out!