Is there a proper workout order routine? [1]

(1) Hi Alice,

I've worked out in the gym for almost 10 years and I have noticed something that bothers me: Most people start their workout with their aerobics routine rather than their power routine. As far as I know, the body uses carbohydrates first, then gets to the fat only after finishing its carbohydrates, and that's why I assumed that it is much better to start with the power routine (after a proper aerobic warm-up) and only then get to the aerobic part. Am I right? And what is the exact explanation for that?

(2) Alice,

Actually, there might be a reason for doing weights first and cardio later: lifting weights needs a lot of free energy, in the form of carbohydrates. The cardio training would consume a lot of these, to the point where you would have very few reserves. So, if you do cardio first, you might not be able to lift as much weight, therefore compromising your workout. Besides, since the goal of cardio many times is to burn fat, it's better to give a "kick in" lifting weights? burning some of your sugars? so that when moving to cardio, you start to burn fat earlier on during the exercise. Or is it?

Answer

Dear Readers (1) and (2),

With a variety of aerobic and weight training programs designed with different and varying goals it's no wonder that you are second guessing your workout regimen. There are varying opinions regarding whether or not to begin your workout with cardio or with weight training. There are also many experts who suggest alternating your routine by doing your cardio on completely separate days than your strength training. Ultimately, a well-balanced work out plan, regardless of the cardio versus strength training order, can help a person achieve her/his goals.

The suggested order for completing a workout that includes both strength training and cardio is: a short warm-up, some strength training, a cardio aspect, and a brief cool-down. The warm-up and cool-down can include stretching, cardio, or both. The order in which you partake in your cardio portion of your workout simply depends upon if you want to focus more on cardio or strength training. For example, you can do a bit of cardio to warm-up the muscles, do your strength training, and then complete a more strenuous cardio portion, cooling down at the end.
with some stretching. On the other hand, you can do all of your cardio at the beginning of your exercise session to pre-fatigue your muscles, do your strength training, and then cool-down with stretching. Likewise, you could do some stretching to warm up, strength training, more intensive cardio, and then more stretching to cool down. As you can see, there are many different ways to structure a workout depending on your individual goals.

There is a difference in the percentage of calories utilized from fat vs. carbohydrates, depending upon the level of exercise intensity. People expend around 60 percent of their calories from fat based caloric reserves while performing low-intensity exercise. This number decreases to 35 percent when performing high-intensity exercise. However, people will still utilize more overall calories and total calories from fat when exercising at a high intensity level than at a low intensity level if the amount of time spent exercising is the same. That said, your body does not burn all of the available calories from carbohydrates and then move on to burning calories from fat. Your body utilizes both at the same time.

For a more personalized consultation focused on your goals, consider talking with a certified personal trainer at a fitness center concerning the latest in fitness research and on the best program for you. Also keep in mind that physical activity goals may change over time so periodic consultations may be a good idea. Bottom line? as long as you are maintaining physical activity and including a warm up at the beginning and cool down with some stretching, the order of your cardio and strength training in between is really a personal choice.

Alice!
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