

# fitness

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MAY 2008

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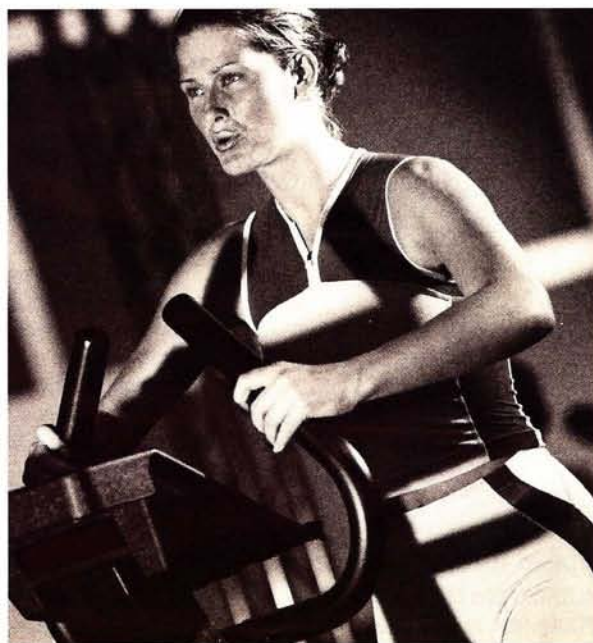
## Does an elliptical compare to a treadmill in terms of intensity?

The two most popular types of cardio equipment are the elliptical machine and treadmill. As fitness professionals, you've no doubt heard from members that an elliptical feels easier to exercise on than a treadmill.

In one study, 14 physically active subjects performed a graded exercise test on both machines. (Two to seven days were allowed between tests.) The tests were designed to produce a maximal effort within eight to 15 minutes of exercise by systematically increasing the intensity every minute. With the treadmill, the speed was increased while maintaining the elevation at 8 percent (to replicate the elevation of the elliptical machine); with the elliptical, the resistance and cadence were changed while keeping the ramp — essentially, the elevation — at level 5. In

both cases, the test was terminated when the subject could no longer maintain the required speed or cadence.

The researchers found that there were no significant differences between the two machines in peak heart rate, peak oxygen intake or maximum Rating of Perceived Exertion. In other words, for the same heart rate and oxygen intake, the effort felt the same on an elliptical as it did on a treadmill. **FM**



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## Are company-sponsored studies biased?

Analyses of pharmaceutical and nutritional studies have shown that industrial funding has an effect on scientific findings. In one analysis, for example, researchers looked at 206 scientific articles that were published in a five-year period on the health effects of milk, juices and soft drinks. It was found that studies funded entirely by an industry "were approximately four to eight times more likely to be favorable to the financial interests of the sponsors" than studies that didn't have any industry-related funding.

"Sponsorship bias" was especially evident in interventional studies (in which researchers give humans a food or food component and measure a response). None of the 16 studies with industry support had an unfavorable conclusion. Meanwhile, seven of the 19 studies without industry support had an unfavorable conclusion.

Keep in mind that scientific journals have guidelines that govern the submission and publication of manuscripts. Among other things, authors must disclose all sources of funding and professional relationships with any company or organization that may benefit from favorable results.

Bottom line: The results of a study tend to favor the funder. **FM**

## Do spicy foods increase metabolic rate?

Metabolic rate is a measure of the usage and storage of calories. It's believed that individuals can increase their metabolic rate by eating certain foods, particularly those that are spicy. If true, of course, this could be a boon for those who are looking to lose weight.

Research has shown that spicy foods do, indeed, increase metabolic rate. Spicy foods accomplish this by raising the temperature of the body. The greatest increase in body temperature is triggered by capsaicin, an ingredient that's

found in chili peppers.

Although the effect of capsaicin appears to be real, it's temporary and small. Keep in mind, too, that eating any food will increase metabolic rate. This is because the body uses calories to digest, absorb and transport food. In general, it's thought that about 10 percent of caloric expenditure goes toward "dietary thermogenesis."

Perhaps of greater interest, though, is the fact that eating spicy foods seems to curb appetite. As it turns out, research indicates that spicy foods produce an increase in satiety and a decrease in caloric intake.

Be advised, though, that some individuals experience gastrointestinal distress from spicy foods. Therefore, spicy foods should be avoided by anyone who suffers from ulcers or chronic heartburn. **FM**

Matt Brzycki is assistant director of campus recreation, fitness at Princeton University, Princeton, N.J. He has more than 25 years of experience at the collegiate level and has authored, co-authored or edited 16 books.

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