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university Q&A

By Matt Brzycki

How accurately do treadmills estimate caloric expenditure?

The numbers given on the console of a treadmill can be quite accurate. If distance and time is known, the accuracy of the machine can be assessed by using equations that are offered by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). Here's an example: One member told me that he walked on a treadmill for 40 minutes. According to the console, he traveled 2.52 miles and used 205 calories during his walk (based on a bodyweight of 166 pounds). Inserting those numbers into the ACSM equations revealed that he used about 205.79 calories. So, the accuracy on this particular treadmill wasn't too shabby.

The accuracy of the caloric expenditure, or any other data, displayed on the console of a cardio machine depends on the accuracy of the equations that are programmed into its "computer." And, of course, the correct bodyweight must be entered for the caloric expenditure to be accurate.



What are some members who want

For older individuals who strength train, the biggest concern is the potential for orthopedic stress. To reduce this risk, they should use slightly higher repetition ranges than those suggested for the general population. Performing higher repetitions will necessitate using somewhat lighter weights, thereby reducing the stress placed on bones and joints. Older individuals might use the following repetition ranges: 20 to 25 reps for exercises that involve the hips, 15 to 20 for the legs and 10 to 15 for the torso.

Also important is the way they perform those repetitions. To decrease risk of injury, older individuals should execute each repetition with a controlled speed of movement. A good rule of thumb is to raise the weight in at least two seconds, pause briefly in the



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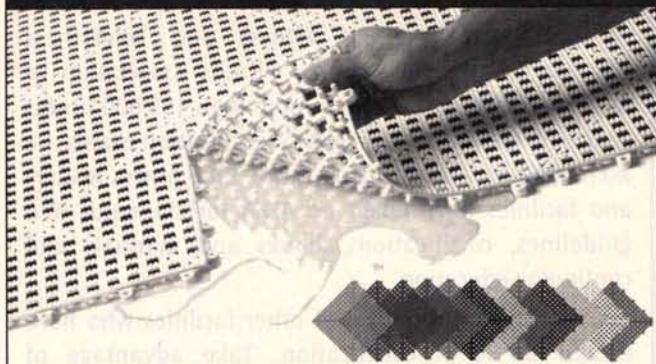


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suggestions for older to strength train?

mid-range position and lower the weight in at least four seconds. Therefore, each repetition should take at least six seconds to perform.

Keep in mind, too, that arthritis and painful joints are common problems. Older individuals who suffer from arthritis or inflamed joints should exercise through a range of motion that is free of pain. Also make sure exercisers don't hold their breath while performing their repetitions. Holding the breath during exertion interferes with the return of blood to the heart. This may deprive the brain of blood, and can cause a person to lose consciousness.

Older individuals are also susceptible to overuse injuries to their muscles and connective tissues. The risk of overuse injuries will be decreased considerably by having them use a relatively low volume of training in terms of frequency and duration. Specifically, strength training for an older individual shouldn't be performed more than two to three times per week (on nonconsecutive days), or exceed about 45 minutes per workout.

How beneficial are the new "express workouts"?

While "express workouts" have received much attention, they really aren't anything new or revolutionary. In fact, the concept of time-efficient workouts was first popularized in the early 1970s. And, in the late 1980s, one major health club chain began marketing the "30-minute workout."

Essentially, express workouts usually involve a series of exercises/activities that are performed in a specified sequence (or "circuit") with a brief recovery interval between each station. At each station, an exerciser performs as many repetitions as possible (hopefully using good technique), then quickly transitions to the next station (sometimes being directed to do so by an audiotape that's played on a sound system).

As the name suggests, the main advantage of express workouts is being able to complete a workout in a time-efficient manner. But are they effective? The answer is yes, if — and only if — the exercisers make their workouts progressively more challenging over time. They can do this by 1) increasing the resistance; 2) lifting the same resistance but for a greater amount of time (if permitted); 3) taking a shorter amount of recovery time between stations (if permitted); or 4) any combination of the three previous options.

But there's one drawback to the current crop of express workouts: boredom. If the same exercises/activities are performed in the same sequence, over and over, participants will eventually lose interest in the program.



Matt Brzycki is coordinator of recreational fitness and wellness programs at Princeton University, Princeton, N.J. He has more than 20 years of experience at the collegiate level and has authored, co-authored or edited 11 books.

Do you have questions that you need answered? Email them to edit@fitnessmgmt.com.

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


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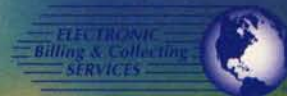
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