Exercise Smarter

Going from zero to 60 at the gym in seconds is risky business. Here's how to work out right.

June 1, 2011 By Cristina Gonzalez

An effective workout isn't only about getting your heart rate going—it also means letting your body recover from exercise, according to Dennis Cardone, DO, an associate professor in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at New York University's Langone Medical Center.

"Warming up has mostly a psychological benefit and [while the evidence is debated] is believed to help decrease muscle stiffness and help muscles contract more efficiently," he says. "Cooling down helps muscles get rid of waste products that accumulate during exercise." (Lactic acid buildup, for example can hamper performance.)

Cardone suggests making the most of your workout with a five- to 10-minute warm-up exercise session well below your full capability. Perform the same movements (without weights) you'll do during your workout. Cool down with another five to 10 minutes of the same exercises or easy walking, jogging or stretching.

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