

Healthy Habits

from Prime of Life Fitness

Cross Training for Functional Fitness

You may have heard of cross-training as something athletes do to prevent or recover from injuries. But what is it really, and do you need to worry about it if you're just an average guy or gal trying to keep the wheels on the bus?



Cross training is simply using different types of exercise to achieve your fitness goals. Different exercises require different muscles and create different cardiovascular responses, so varying your workouts can keep you from getting overuse injuries or from developing painful muscle imbalances. An avid runner might choose to swim occasionally to keep his heart working, but give his joints a break. Or a cyclist might take a weekly hike to be sure she's getting some weight-bearing exercise and giving her hip flexors a stretch.

For beginners and non-athletes, the same principles apply. Include a variety of exercises in your workout routine to ensure that you're not overdoing it in one area while leaving another set of muscles unchallenged.

If your primary exercise is walking, try out a rowing machine at your rec center, or find a Tai Chi or low-impact aerobics class. If you love to swim, be sure to include some occasional weight-bearing exercise, like ice skating or tennis. If your favorite workout is lifting weights at the gym, challenge your flexibility with a yoga class.

Ideally, over the course of a week, your exercise routine will include elements of strength, endurance, balance and flexibility. Try to engage all your major muscle groups at some point, and aim for exercises that include all [five essential movements](#).

Cross training is a great way to make sure you maintain full-body fitness and functionality, and it keeps your workouts from becoming stale and boring.

Action Item: For each of the next four weeks, try out one new physical activity that's not normally part of your routine. And feel free to pick something fun, like badminton

or ballroom dancing!



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