What Kind of Exercise is Best?

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Aerobic exercise gets your heart pumping and your breathing rate up. This type of exercise burns fat and improves cardiovascular function. Examples include walking, hiking (especially with hills), running, bicycling, swimming and skating.

Strength training exercise tones and strengthens muscles. Examples include lifting weights, using resistance bands and doing exercises such as push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups and leg squats.

It’s helpful to pick a type of exercise you enjoy. The goal is to find activities that fit into your daily life so you’re motivated to do them regularly. Some people prefer to start their day with exercise in the morning, while others prefer to exercise at night. Many people enjoy participating in team sports, while others prefer solo activities.

Yoga, Pilates, tai chi and qi gong—which promote strength, balance and flexibility—can be good options, especially for people who are older or have physical limitations. Classes are often available online. Try varying your activities to prevent boredom. Take advantage of the weather and the seasons—for example, swim in the summer, ski in the winter and work out at the gym when it's raining. Remember, everyday activities such as walking the dog, gardening and dancing contribute to your total weekly physical activity.

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