



ACSM Information On...

Selecting and Effectively Using a Stationary Bicycle

Stationary bicycles are a safe and effective means of exercise. They provide low-impact cardiovascular exercise, are generally quiet in operation, and are efficient with their use of space.

A COMPLETE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM

A well-rounded physical activity program includes aerobic exercise and strength training exercise, but not necessarily in the same session. This blend helps maintain or improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness and overall health and function. Regular physical activity will provide more health benefits than sporadic, high intensity workouts, so choose exercises you are likely to enjoy and that you can incorporate into your schedule.

ACSM's physical activity recommendations for healthy adults, updated in 2011, recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (working hard enough to break a sweat, but still able to carry on a conversation) five days per week, or 20 minutes of more vigorous activity three days per week. Combinations of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity can be performed to meet this recommendation.

Examples of typical aerobic exercises are:

- Walking
- Running
- Stair climbing
- Cycling
- Rowing
- Cross country skiing
- Swimming.

In addition, strength training should be performed a minimum of two days each week, with 8-12 repetitions of 8-10 different exercises that target all major muscle groups. This type of training can be accomplished using body weight, resistance bands, free weights, medicine balls or weight machines.

When purchasing a stationary bicycle, be sure to consider:

- The seating position on the bicycle;
- The method of resistance; and
- Your needs and interests.

Exercisers may choose the standard upright bicycle or semi-recumbent (sitting) bicycle. For resistance, stationary bicycles use friction belts or wheels, magnets, hydraulics or fans. Most upright bicycles come with a large, well-padded saddle. For individuals with lower back pain, mobility or balance concerns, a semi-recumbent stationary bicycle may be a safer, more comfortable option. Computer, size and resistance mechanism options will allow you to select the stationary bicycle to meet your fitness goals. Remember, more expensive models do not inherently make you more fit. An inexpensive model used regularly can adequately provide the necessary resistance to increase cardiovascular fitness.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- Stability; wide base for ergometer
- Protected or covered flywheel and/or fans



MAINTENANCE AND DURABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Established, reputable company
- Assembly requirements
- Warranties and local maintenance
- Annual maintenance costs
- Availability of replacement parts



POWER, PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Capable of providing adequate resistance
- Consider noise generated by fans
- Adequately adjusts for proper fit on the bicycle
- Comfortable seat, saddle and handlebars
- Consider the size of the assembled unit
- Are the electrical requirements, if any, available in your exercise area?
- Guidelines for assembly and operation should be clear and complete.

USING A STATIONARY BICYCLE

- Make sure your stationary bicycle is positioned so all moving parts are allowed safe clearance.
- Ensure you have adequate room to safely mount and dismount the machine.
- Consider the handlebar and saddle height on the bicycle before beginning to cycle. Adjust the saddle so that it is level with the floor.
- It may take several cycling sessions and some adjustments to find your perfect position.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Spend time testing stationary bicycle models before you buy. Adjustability, noise and ease of operation should be considered in the store, not in your living room.
- Proper position is imperative. Be patient and complete in your positioning process.
- Drinking enough water during exercise is important for a successful workout
- Adequate ventilation makes your exercise environment more enjoyable.
- Make it a habit! A stationary bicycle is only good for your health if you use it. Set attainable goals for regular use of your home exercise equipment.

STAYING ACTIVE PAYS OFF!

Those who are physically active tend to live longer, healthier lives. Research shows that moderate physical activity – such as 30 minutes a day of brisk walking – significantly contributes to longevity. Even a person with risk factors like high blood pressure, diabetes or even a smoking habit can gain real benefits from incorporating regular physical activity into their daily life.

As many dieters have found, exercise can help you stay on a diet and lose weight. What's more – regular exercise can help lower blood pressure, control blood sugar, improve cholesterol levels and build stronger, denser bones.

THE FIRST STEP

Before you begin an exercise program, take a fitness test, or substantially increase your level of activity, make sure to answer the following questions. This physical activity readiness questionnaire (PAR-Q) will help determine if you're ready to begin an exercise routine or program.

- Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition or that you should participate in physical activity only as recommended by a doctor?
- Do you feel pain in your chest during physical activity?
- In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?
- Do you lose your balance from dizziness? Do you ever lose consciousness?
- Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?
- Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs for your blood pressure or a heart condition?
- Do you know of any reason you should not participate in physical activity?

If you answered yes to one or more questions, if you are over 40 years of age and have recently been inactive, or if you are concerned about your health, consult a physician before taking a fitness test or substantially increasing your physical activity. If you answered no to each question, then it's likely that you can safely begin exercising.

PRIOR TO EXERCISE

Prior to beginning any exercise program, including the activities depicted in this brochure, individuals should seek medical evaluation and clearance to engage in activity. Not all exercise programs are suitable for everyone, and some programs may result in injury. Activities should be carried out at a pace that is comfortable for the user. Users should discontinue participation in any exercise activity that causes pain or discomfort. In such event, medical consultation should be immediately obtained.



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