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Physical Activity Break: Cardio Pyramid

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Do the exercises listed in order with no rest and then go back through the exercises in reverse order. You will need 3-4 minutes to do the entire progression in forward and reverse order.

This also helps participants challenge their minds as they learn new moves and try to remember the order!

1. March in place (8 counts)

- Start in standing position, feet hip width apart
- Bring right leg up, with your knee ending up halfway between your hip and the ground, return to start
- Bring left leg up, with your knee ending up halfway between your hip and the ground, return to start

Increase intensity for this move:

- Speed up the movement; high knee jog in place
- Incorporate your arms by bending your elbows, and hinging at your shoulders. This is a natural walking motion, but faster pace.

Seated variation: Sit up tall in your chair, engage core*, lift legs one at a time and return to starting position. *"Engage core" means tighten stomach muscles and make sure your back is straight. Doing this helps protect your back.

2. Step Touch (16 counts)

- Start with feet shoulder width apart
- Begin by stepping wide to the right. Without stopping bring the left foot to the right foot, tap, and then step out with the left foot.
- Without stopping bring the right foot to the left foot, tap, and repeat this side to side continuously until the time is up.

Increase intensity for this move:

Bring your arms up to shoulder height, arms and body in the shape of a "T". At the same time you are stepping side-to-side, pulse your arms up and down in a small range of motion. Keep them about shoulder width and moving up and down about 8 inches total.

3. Step to the side (2x) for 16 counts

- Start with feet shoulder width apart.
- Begin by stepping wide to the right. Take another step wide to the right.
- Step wide to the left. Take one more step to the left.

Increase intensity for this move:

Incorporate your arms:

Bring your arms to chest height, slight bend in your elbow.

Cross arms in front of you and then squeeze shoulder blades as you step to the side.

Advanced:

With the arm variation mentioned above, take deeper squats to the side as you step (i.e., bend knees more).

4. Hamstring Curls (16 counts)

- a. Start with feet hip distance apart
- b. Step to the right and bring your left heel toward your bum
- c. Step to the left and bring your right heel toward your bum

Increase intensity for this move:

Incorporate your arms:

Bring your elbows in toward your ribs; bend your elbow in a “biceps curl” motion

Advanced:

Use the arm variation mentioned above.

- a. Start with feet hip distance apart
- b. Step to the right and bring your left heel toward your bum
- c. Press from your right leg as you jump to your left with your right leg bending toward your bum

*This is a bouncing, or hopping, motion from side to side.

5. V-Step (16 counts)

- a. Start with your feet hip distance apart, arms bent and hands by your chest.
- b. Walk your right leg forward and punch your right arm up towards the ceiling corner.
- c. Bring your left leg in-line with your right, while punching your left arm towards the ceiling corner.
- d. Step back to the start position while pulling your arms back down.

Increase intensity for this move:

The deeper the lunge and harder the punches, the more advanced the move.

6. High Knees (16 counts)

- a. Start in standing position, feet hip width apart
- b. Bring right leg up to hip height, return to start
- c. Bring left leg up to hip height, return to start

Increase intensity for this move:

- a. Speed up the movement; high knee jog in place
- b. Incorporate your arms by bending your elbows, and hinging at your shoulders. This is a natural walking motion, but faster pace.

*When you incorporate your arms in each move, you increase the intensity. The higher your arms, the more intense the move:

no arms = low intensity, arms at shoulder height = moderate intensity, arms above head = high intensity.

Even more options: A subset of cardio pyramid combinations

Beginner: Complete the exercises 1-6 and then 6-1 at the same intensity each way.

Intermediate: Complete exercise 1-6 at a low intensity then 6-1 at a moderate intensity then 1-6 at a low intensity.

Advance: Complete exercises 1-6 at a moderate intensity, 6-1 at a high intensity, 1-6 at a moderate intensity. Cool down by marching in place.