

# A Balanced Fitness Routine

**Aerobic Fitness:** The cornerstone of most programs, aerobic exercise helps your heart and lungs function better as it increases oxygen in the blood. Aerobic exercise targets large muscle groups and increases heart rate. Swimming, dancing, and bike riding are each great aerobic activities. 30 to 60 minutes is the daily recommendation.

**Muscular Conditioning:** Regular strength training assists in reducing body fat, increases lean muscle mass, and burns calories, thereby protecting the body from injury and increasing stamina. Resistance machines, free weights, resistance bands, and even homemade weights can be used to strengthen your muscles.

**Stretching:** Aerobic and muscular exercise cause our muscles to contract and flex. It is important to stretch them out in order to improve flexibility and range of motion. Stretching can also relieve stress and help prevent injury if done prior to exercise. Try setting aside time to stretch before and after each workout, or do it by itself to maintain flexibility. Tai Chi and yoga are beneficial stretching activities.

**Core Stability:** The core is composed of the muscles in the abdomen, back and pelvis. These muscles support the body and provide balance, and therefore it is important to keep them strong and healthy. Traditional crunches and ab- machines that target this area are beneficial. Practicing core-focused exercises, like Pilates, is also a great way to strengthen these important muscles.