

ROW MACHINE WORKOUTS

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Images

The rowing machine might not be as popular as treadmills or elliptical machines at your gym, but this oft-neglected piece of equipment provides cardiovascular exercise while working your arms, legs, back and shoulder muscles. Used incorrectly, however, they also can cause back problems. Rowing machine workouts should consist of proper warmups, proper form and gradual increases in time and resistance on the machine. Consult your doctor or an exercise specialist to best structure rowing machine workouts.

STRETCHING

Before you mount the rowing machine, you first should perform stretching exercises for your back. Stretching components in a workout will improve your flexibility and range of motion once you are on the machine, according to MayoClinic.com. Lie with your back and feet flat on your floor and your knees in the air. Roll your knees to one side, keeping your shoulders flat on the floor. Hold that position for five to 10 seconds, then return your knees upright. Repeat this motion, rolling your knees in the other direction.

WARM UP

British Rowing recommends warming up for about five minutes on the rowing machine to prepare your body for the workout and boost your heart rate. Set the rowing machine on its lowest intensity level and perform the full slide for two to four minutes. End with a very slow slide, taking about a minute to perform the full motion. If you prefer to warm up off the rowing machine, about five minute of light jogging, squats or lunges also will do the trick.

AEROBIC EXERCISE

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that beginners exercise on the rowing machine for about 15 minutes at a low intensity for an aerobic workout. To avoid injury, row in a continuous motion. Begin in the "catch" position, knees bent and arms extended forward holding the machine's handle. You

perform a stroke by straightening your legs, keeping your arms forward until you almost fully extend the legs. At that point, flex your elbows to pull the handle to your chest. Return to the catch position by bending your legs and moving your upper body forward, over your hips.

COOL DOWN

You should end a rowing machine workout with about five minutes of cooling down, according to British Rowing. This should consist of about five minutes of stretching your arms, legs and back. You can repeat the slow rowing motions of the warmup or you can do light stretches of those muscles off the machine.

ADVANCED

Once you become more comfortable with the machine and your fitness level improves -- usually after a few weeks or months--you can begin to lengthen your aerobic workout on the rowing machine, according to the ACSM. Over the weeks, you can increase in five-minute intervals to 20 minutes, 25 minutes then 30 minutes. You also can increase the resistance levels to add more strength training to your workout, but the ACSM suggests doing so only if you can maintain a steady pace on the machine. Slower strokes at higher resistance levels increase your vulnerability to back injury.

REFERENCES

- [MayoClinic.com: Stretching: Focus on Flexibility](#)
- [MayoClinic.com: Back Exercises in 15 Minutes a Day](#)
- [British Rowing: Warm Up](#)
- [American College of Sports Medicine: Selecting and Effectively Using a Rowing Machine](#)
- ["The Washington Post": Rowing Against the Current of Fitness Habits; 2005](#)

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