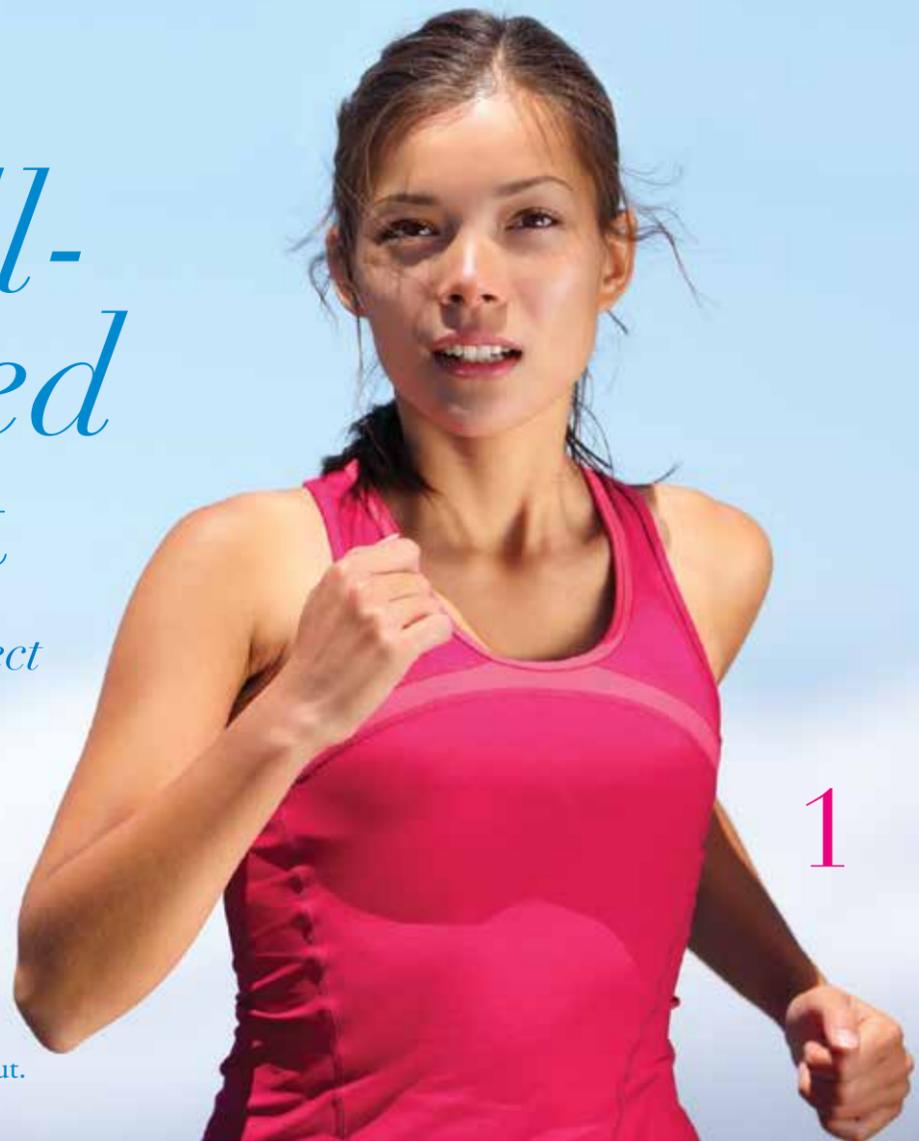


Your *Well-Rounded* Workout

5 elements of the perfect exercise regimen

By **Brian Beise**

It's good to work hard, but why not **work smart**, too? If your workout plan isn't well-rounded, your exercise may be inefficient, uneven, or even harmful. Read on for help in setting good goals and planning and executing your own custom, well-rounded workout.



#1. Cardio. Elevating your heart rate is vital for achieving your optimal work out. Studies have shown that doing interval-based workouts lead to quicker cardio benefits and weight loss. Exercises that bring the heart rate up and keep it up include elliptical machines, treadmills, stair climbers, cycling, running, and hiking. Exercise classes led by an instructor can be a great place to start.

Other excellent cardio activities: aerobic dance, swimming, jumping rope, kickboxing, rowing, soccer, lacrosse, basketball, tennis

#2. Strength training. Strength training is not just for bodybuilders and professional athletes. The older we get, the more we have to work to build and maintain muscle. Add weight lifting to your workout. Don't start with too much weight, don't go through repetitions too quickly, and rest for 30-90 seconds in between sets. Build muscle now to help prevent any number of health problems as you age.

Other strength training activities: working with resistance bands, doing exercises that use body weight for resistance (e.g., push ups, sit ups, lunges, pull-ups, squats)



#3. Core exercises. While certain exercises like sit-ups or planks focus on your core, just about any exercise will work out your core, if done correctly. Make sure you keep your navel pulled in and up during every exercise to help improve posture and core strength. Keeping proper form while engaging the core is not always easy, and may require help from a trainer, but the benefits are worth the effort.

Other core-targeting exercises: sit-ups, push-ups, planks, bridges, prone arm and leg lifts (e.g. "Superman," V-sits (a sit-up variety where your body forms a "V"))

#4. Balance training. Balance is a skill, which means it can be taught, learned, and mastered. The better your balance, the less energy you waste as you move, and the lower your risk of injury as you work out. A great way to do balance training is taking a yoga class. If yoga is not for you, just taking off your shoe and standing on one foot for a set amount of time every day can help build your balance. As a bonus, you can squat just a little and engage those leg muscles.

Other balance activities: stability ball workout, balance beam, trampoline, Wii Balance Board

#5. Flexibility & stretching. Whatever your age or fitness level, you should be stretching daily. As with just about any fitness activity, the earlier you start stretching, the more success you'll have as you age. If you can't bend down and touch your toes, you are likely at increased risk of back pain. Yoga class is a wonderful way to learn safe and effective stretching techniques, but basic stretches like downward-facing dog can be done at home.

Other flexibility activities: swimming, dancing, tai chi