Components of a Workout

A "workout" commonly refers to an exercise session. There are three basic parts to any exercise session.

**Warm-Up**

The first part of any activity session is the warm-up. The general purpose of the warm-up is to prepare the body for the physical bout and should incorporate the muscles to be used in the main form of exercise. For cardiorespiratory exercise, the warm-up should slowly elevate the heart rate to an aerobic level, involving the large muscle groups of the body. Stretching can be included as part of the warm-up, but an active 5-10 minute warm-up should occur before any flexibility exercises are performed. Warm muscles stretch more easily and are less likely strained. Benefits of a warm-up include an increased blood flow to stimulate fuel availability; an increased ability of the cardiorespiratory system to respond to sudden, strenuous exercise; and perspiring, which aids the body in maintaining a safe internal temperature.

**Work Bout**

This part of the workout is where the majority of an individual's work is performed. The work bout design is based on the "FIT" principle, described in another section of this week's online reading. An individual has control over the number of workouts engaged in per week, the difficulty ("intensity") of any given work bout, and the duration of each workout ("time").

**The Warm-Down (or Cool-Down)**

The purpose of the warm-down is to gradually return the body to its pre-work-bout phase. After cardiorespiratory exercise, the warm-down is performed to decrease the heart rate from a higher, aerobic level to a lower level. This heart rate reduction is accomplished by continually moving the large muscles of the body after the work bout, but in a way that the intensity progressively lessens. Some general physiological benefits associated with warm-down include the decreased levels of waste products (lactic acid, e.g.) in the blood, which in turn promotes a faster recovery from acute fatigue; the prevention of dizziness and delayed muscle fatigue which can occur from the blood pooling in the lower body when warm-down is not performed; and a decreased likelihood for cardiac irregularities.